

2010

Listening to their Voices: Gang Members' Perceptions of their Schooling and their Teachers

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Listening to their Voices: Gang Members' Perceptions
of their Schooling and their Teachers

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy at Virginia Commonwealth University

by

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May, 2010

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I first want to thank the four students who participated in this study. I enjoyed the time that I was able to spend with each young man. In a short period of time, I was able to see potential, talent, and passion in these four students. It is my hope that this study will help teachers to look beyond the “hard postures” of students in gangs to see their strengths and gifts.

I also want to thank my dissertation committee for all of their work and insight. Thank you Dr. Nora Alder, Dr. John Mahoney, and Dr. Paul Gerber. I especially want to thank Dr. Maike Philipsen for her support and guidance. I learned so much not only from the research and the process of this study, but from her experience and dedication to qualitative research.

I would like to thank my family and friends for all of their support and patience during this long and tedious process. To my Dad, Joe Wall and my Mother, Sylvia Wall, I cannot thank you enough for seeing me through this degree. Thank you both for the tuition money when I was struggling financially, for a quiet place to study when I needed it, and for all of the pep talks you have given me for the past eight years. Last, I thank God my savior for His blessings and strength. "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me." Philippians 4:13

DEDICATION

I dedicate this dissertation to my husband, Jawanza Whitfield. Thank you for your continued support, guidance, and for being my “sounding board” for this research. I value your insight into the issue of gangs in schools and your endless patience with me.

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ABSTRACT

LISTENING TO THEIR VOICES: GANG MEMBERS' PERCEPTIONS OF THEIR
SCHOOLING AND THEIR TEACHERS

By Martha Lynn Wall-Whitfield, Ph.D.

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy at Virginia Commonwealth University.

Virginia Commonwealth University, 2010

Dissertation Chair: Maike Philipsen, Professor, School of Education

Although gangs have long been present, gangs exert an increasingly significant influence on the culture of students who attend schools, especially in urban environments. This case study investigation involved a purposeful sampling of four young men who were involved in gangs. By spending time with each young man in several interviews, I was able to gain insight into his perceptions of schooling, his teachers, and his view on caring in schools.

The individual interviews focused on each student's experiences in schooling through the lens of care. This research took in-depth look at these four gang members in their individual schooling environments. Although the literature gives a glance at gang members and their perspectives on education, the research has only touched the surface in understanding this complex youth. This study has added to the literature on gangs in schools and has explained in detail what these four gang members perceived in regards to their teachers and care. With these interviews, I have identified other themes related to gangs in schools that can be further researched. In this study, these four gang members have been given a voice.

Chapter 1: Distant Voices

Background

It seems that almost every day the news media bombards viewers with stories of gang-related crime, drive-by shootings, gang wars, and drug busts. These stories give the facts as the police or witnesses report. Mug shots of teenage perpetrators are often projected onto television screens across America. A newscaster or newspaper writer will detail how a “gangbanger” committed a crime. It is not unusual to see stories about police arresting juveniles who are thought to be connected to a gang-related shooting (Frank, 2007).

Gang-related activity often trickles into the public school system. Today in public schools across America, gangs and the gang-like culture are everywhere. This influence can be seen in the way the students dress, speak, and communicate with each other. The streets and the life of a gang member are a powerful force. Rodriguez (1993), a former gang member, tells detailed stories of his life in a gang in his autobiography *Always Running*. He relates that as a young man, he witnessed the growing power of gangs in his school. He states, “I wanted this power. I wanted to be able to bring a whole school to its knees and even make the teachers squirm. I wanted the power to hurt somebody” (Rodriguez, 1993, p. 42).

Youth gangs are not just about gaining power. They become an even more dangerous threat when the students begin to identify these “crews” as their “family.” According to Yablonsky (2001), most students who join gangs come from dysfunctional families. Adolescents may join gangs when their families are torn apart by divorce, violence alcoholism, or abuse. By joining a gang, the child will find love,

support, and even caretakers within a neighborhood set. When a student begins to identify his “crew” as his family, it becomes an unstoppable force that spills into every aspect of his or her life. Consequently, it makes sense that this powerful force affects schools.

In the book *Dangerous Society*, author Taylor (1990) interviewed both students and staff in a school environment to get their perspectives on gangs in their school. He spent time with the staff, asking questions about their observations of gang activity and students who are in gangs. A cafeteria worker states, “Some kids running around with crews ‘cause it’s cool, some ‘cause they need protection. But for some, it’s like a family or a chance to become something for a change...it’s their chance to be a star [sic]” (Taylor, 1990, p. 87). Gang members can be hostile, disruptive, aggressive, and even dangerous. In the same book, a high school counselor makes the statement that, “The kids who aren’t part of the thugs and drugs are paying a horrible price [sic]” (Taylor, 1990, p. 77).

However, it is not just the students affected by gang members who are paying a price because their education is compromised. Educators must also consider the education of students who are in gangs. These students may dress in colors, flash gang signs, and may be involved in the violence, drugs, and boundary wars that are associated with gangs. Their school day may focus on gang participation and not education. In addition, gang members may feel the need to act out in school by defying authority figures, flashing signs or selling drugs to show their allegiance to their gang. Students may also feel threatened by those in other gangs and may not feel safe. Gang members may act out in school, deface school property, and commit violent acts; however, they are still required by law to attend school. Educators must

teach these gangbangers, or gang members, in their classrooms despite the acting out and threatening behaviors.

It is a difficult and multifaceted problem that gang research has only just begun to grasp. “B-dog,” a gang member who was interviewed by Bing in her book *Do or Die*, has many ideas about gangbangers in schools. He states, “The schools these days, they only teach little shit, anyway. To me, the street gangs’re better than school. Lemme say it this way—little motherfuckers be out there, they gotta learn how to survive [sic]” (Bing, 1991, p. 218). This negative view of school is held by many gang members. Not only do many gang members view school as a waste of time, but some even use school as an outlet for gang activity. Bobby, a gangbanger interviewed by Carl Taylor, says “I hate school, I’m trying to sell my bags at school [sic]” (Taylor, 1990, p. 53). However, by law gang members are required to attend school.

This research took in-depth look at gang members in schools. Although the literature gives a glance at gang members and their perspectives on education, the research only touches the surface of this complex youth. By giving a voice to these students, educators may gain insight into what needs to be done to better educate them. Perhaps if their stories are told, teachers will be able to better understand gang members’ perspectives on their own education.

Overview of the Literature

In order to research gangs in a manner that helps to understand their perspectives fully, it is vital to define the term “gang.” Although there are many definitions of a “gang,” I used a definition that encompasses many of the accepted

definitions and directly relates to the populations to be studied. Virginia states in

“The Code of Virginia” that a street gang is defined as:

“any ongoing organization, association, or group of three or more persons, whether formal or informal (i) which has as one of its primary objectives or activities the commission of one or more criminal activities (ii) which has an identifiable name or identifying sign or symbol (iii) whose members individually or collectively have engaged in the commission of, attempt to commit, conspiracy to commit, or solicitation to two or more predicate criminal acts, at least one of which is an act of violence, provided such acts were not part of a common act or transaction” (§ 18.2-46.1: *The Code of Virginia*, 2000).

Upon defining a gang, it is important to look at the type of student who joins a gang. If a student has an unstable family life or comes from a home in where he or she is abused, it is easy to see membership in a gang as a way to provide personal security. Wood, Furlong, Rosenblatt, and Robertson (1997) that participation in a gang offers members an atmosphere of brotherhood, respect, protection, belonging, control, and power. When an individual is part of a gang, the student receives affection, understanding, and emotional security that he or she may not receive at home. Students may enjoy the relationships and feel excitement about the rivalries and violence. “Membership can become addictive” (Wood, Furlong, Rosenblatt, & Robertson, 1997, p. 282). It is for these reasons that gangs are such a threat to the school environment.

Gangs appear to be an effective way to meet needs of youth by offering a “family” to students who may not have any support or protection at home. If these students were finding fulfillment at home or at school, they would not be seeking out a gang for relationships. “When students receive positive opportunities to be someone and do something in the eyes of others, they will be too busy (and too

happy) to feel the need to join a gang” (Juarez, 1996, p. 32). Huff (2001) agrees with this sentiment and suggests that “members of a gang who leave typically have developed increased ties to a social institution” (p. 53). For example, a student may leave a gang because he has found a job environment where he feels cared for or because he has found an after school activity that interferes with his time on the streets with the gang.

Although gangs have long been present, gangs exert an increasingly significant influence on the culture of students who attend schools, especially in urban environments. The gang influence is evident in youth activities, including car jacking, fighting, selling drugs, drive-by shootings, and even murder (Stone, 2000). All these activities can be gang related. Gang activity also includes destruction of property, graffiti, and gang fights. The word *gang* invokes fear and trepidation among many law-abiding citizens because of the activities associated with gang membership (Ozimo, Ozimo, & Honda, 1997). This fear is seen in America’s public school system as gang activity in school is a rising concern among both educators and parents.

Increased participation in gang activity among school-aged students is accompanied by a larger cultural shift—the prevalence, acceptance, and mainstreaming of gangs is common. A large part of today’s American youth culture is centered on a prevalent “gang-like” mentality. Gang culture is seen in the form of language, music, body markings, and clothing, which have become more mainstreamed throughout the media and have trickled into the school systems. These symbols have made it increasingly more difficult to differentiate gang members from

those students who merely identify with the culture and fashion (Evans, Fitzgerald, Weigel, & Chvilicek, 1999).

Many students in schools identify with the gang culture, even if they are not members of a gang. Gang values, attitudes, and behaviors are imitated and assimilated (Stone, 2000). These values and behaviors shown on television and in movies are often mirrored through student dress and behavior in schools. Anderson (1999), a prominent researcher on urban culture, states “An ideology of alienation supporting an oppositional culture has developed; this can be seen with particular clarity in the rap music that encourages its young listeners to kill cops, to rape, and the like” (p. 107). The hallways in many American schools are filled with many types of students, including those who dress like gang members and those who are gang members.

It has been shown that more children are looking to gangs to fulfill their needs and that more children are becoming involved in gangs. According to Vittori (2007) there are currently 731,500 gang members in the United States who belong to 21,500 gangs. In comparison, the 1970s existed approximately 2,300 gangs with 98,000 members (Griffin & Meacham, 2002). However, the exact numbers are difficult to determine because of the differing definitions of gangs. Delaney (2006) states that the total number of street gang members is most likely still below one million (p. 12).

With so many students joining gangs or considering doing so, it has been noted that too often minorities and students of low income and socio-economic status look to gangs to meet their needs. Monti (1994) states “Gangs are important to youth. They do not give meaning to a youngster’s life, but gangs offer different ways for a youngster to build a meaningful life” (Monti, 1994, p. 156). This statement suggests

that if gangs can offer ways for youth to build a meaningful life, these youth are not having their needs met at home or within the school system.

As their needs are not met, some students will join a gang to find a place where they fit. Often students will find parental figures within the groupings of a neighborhood gang. Monti (1994) observes that some gangs take the time to lead their youth. He states that gangs will watch their members' progress, offer them advice, and teach them right from wrong according to gang standards. He adds that gangs show their members the boundaries and work with them to become a gang member by offering opportunities to practice, learn, and improve. While the activities of the youth may be illegal or negative, this opportunity to practice, learn, and improve builds their esteem and deepens their relationships to the gang community. He concludes by explaining that gangs also offer their members rewards and incentives. These incentives may include money when the gang member does not have any. Other incentives may include tangible items that may bring them "respect" in the eyes of their peers such as clothes or jewelry. Sometimes the gangs even provide for their members' families when their own parents cannot (Monti, 1994).

As some students are joining gangs bound by illegal activity, gangs and the gang culture have become a major concern to both public and private schools across America. Yet there is more to it than what is surfacing in news reports and school violence statistics. Reep (1996) states that, "While gang-related drug trafficking and drive-by shootings have earned gangs a deserved evil reputation, we rarely acknowledge the cohesiveness of the gang or the characteristics that rank them as a powerful entity within our culture" (p. 26).

Reep (1996) took the time to talk to gang members in schools across America to learn about the characteristics of their gang culture and their thoughts about their schools. The students she interviewed stated that school administrators did not listen to them. They said that their principals were uncaring and did not want to understand the gang culture. She also discovered that gang members believed that their teachers were too rigid and did not attempt to make learning personal or relate learning to their lives or experiences. The gang members also expressed that schools avoided them, offered them few choices, and did not have enough minority teachers or hands-on projects.

Reep is not the only researcher who has interviewed gang members and found that they do not value school. Paton (1998) interviewed 98 gang members from two different gang sets in California. He concluded, "Many informants feel that they have no realistic chance to succeed" (Paton, 1998, p. 73). He adds that these gang members do not see education as a way to improve their lives.

Despite the negative views many gang members have on schooling, there has been some research that demonstrates gang members can and do have positive school experiences. Dance's (2002) research focuses on how the gang culture affects schools. She states that the demonstration of care from teacher to student was the leading factor behind teacher success with gang members. According to her, "Every student is important in the eyes of a truly caring teacher; and, in the eyes of a street savvy student, every relationship with a caring teacher is a scarce but treasured resource" (Dance, 2002, p. 84). Dance spent several years working with students who were in gangs and argues student interviews suggest that caring is instrumental to stable relations between teachers and their students.

Dance's research also suggests that students in gangs need these positive relationships and healthy interactions with adults to foster success in school. Hill (1995) found similar results. She began a book club at the juvenile detention center where she worked to allow her students, who were mostly incarcerated because of crimes related to gangs, an opportunity to interact socially with each other. She hypothesized that if her students were drawn so easily into gangs that perhaps they would be drawn into the book club because it offered similar qualities. For example, as in a gang, the book club offered "identity to students, an established environment for peer approval and recognition, and [it] gave students a chance to excel in a way that they hadn't before" (Hill, 1995, p. 181). As the students read and discussed a variety of books, Hill assigned writing prompts. By the third session, the students were writing. In their writing, they responded to the reading and made meaningful connections to both the literature and their lives. The students began to use writing as a catharsis to deal with their emotional trials. The book club allowed them to "explore their own minds, hearts, and feelings" (Hill, 1995, p. 187).

Writing also became a productive outlet for gang member Rodriguez. He was able to give more examples of how caring affected both himself and his gang members through telling his life story. Rodriguez (1993), a gang member from Los Angeles, writes in his book *Always Running* about his older brother Rano. He says that his brother "turned out better than me" partially because of a teacher at his school, Mrs. Snelling. According to Rodriguez, Mrs. Snelling saw theatrical talent in Rano and worked with him in school plays.

These are a few examples of how teachers and administrators may take the time to address the issues of gangs in schools in an educational and caring manner.

Tarcy (1995) also offers examples of non-conventional ways of helping students deal with gang issues. He writes of Truman High School in California where the principal hired a gang counselor who was able to relate to the students. This counselor, Robert Montoya, worked with the students by using honesty and a “straight-forward approach.” He also offered incentives to the students, like rebuilding a low-rider car, which was later raffled to one of the students. This incentive was chosen to appeal to their interests and to increase student participation. This project also allowed students an opportunity to earn “respect” in the eyes of their peers and gave them skills that could be used in the workforce.

Tarcy (1995) documents that another school, Jordan High School in Long Beach, paid students to attend a peace forum with all types of other students. The principal not only invited the valedictorian and football stars, but also the gang leaders who attend the school. During the year, the group met and confronted school issues together. Both the stories of Truman High School and Jordan High School are unconventional ways that use the gang culture and gang members to help solve problems. However, each example is yet another story of caring teachers, counselors, and administrators who learned about their students and worked with their individual strengths despite their connections to gangs or gang activity.

The research also demonstrates that it is vital not only to offer social and educational opportunities to students who are in gangs, but to offer a safe environment where the gang members know that they are protected. Often gangs will call a “truce” in school when they know that administrators and teachers are aware of behaviors and are “watching” them (Tarcy, 1995). This type of acknowledgement allows them to feel safe. By acknowledgment, understanding, and open discussion, “truce” situations

can happen in a school environment. In addition, Duffy and Gilling (2003) in their book, *Teen Gangs, a Global View*, state that, “Most gang violence is largely related to emotional protection of one’s character and defense of the gang” (p. 220). If gangs and members feel protected in a school environment, this violence is less likely to erupt on school grounds. Simply stated, ignoring or “stifling” this type of problem will not make it go away. Listening to students and showing empathy to their plight on the streets seems to be a more apparent answer. Dance agrees, by stating that an empathetic community is a major determinant of success for gang members in schools (2002).

Gangs in schools can affect both the learning and safety of all students and it is a growing problem. The lifestyle and moral values behind the words of gang members are demonstrative of the dangers that these students create in schools not only for themselves but also for other students. It is important to hear the stories of gang members in order to understand them.

Purpose of the Study

Gang influences within schools are a concern for educators because of the increase of gang related activities occurring during the school day. Gangs have the potential to affect both the physical and emotional well being of students and change the culture of the school. Not including potential violence, gang activity in school may include acts of vandalism and gang recruitment (Duke, 2002).

Huff & Trump (1996) reported that more than half of the students involved in a gang acknowledged that their gang members assaulted teachers in their school. Seventy percent of these same students admitted that their gangs assaulted students.

In addition, 80% of the gang members admitted taking knives and guns to school, and 60% admitted to selling drugs in school.

The research also suggests that school staff contribute to the increase in gang activity in schools. Lal, Lal, and Achilles (1993) state that educators are often the most affected by gang activity in schools but are also the least prepared. These authors describe the teaching norms of privacy, the loneliness of individual classrooms, and schedule enforced isolation contributing to gang activity as there are no cooperative efforts to handle the gangs. Last, Lal, Lal, and Achilles (1993) state that too often law enforcement is used to handle gangs, not school officials, and they suggest it is done by punishing individuals through suspension or expulsion. This punitive method allows schools to be rid of individuals who are causing problems, but it does not eliminate gangs. It seems to be easy for school administrators to believe as if they are “handling” the gang problem through a few expulsions (Lal, Lal, & Achilles, 1993).

Research on gangs is important if educators ever expect to have success with gang members in their classrooms and to minimize the negative affects of gangs in schools. However, research on gangs is not easy. Venkatesh (2003) states that, “Research contact with gangs is difficult, and to create lasting ties that would enable longitudinal research to develop is an even greater challenge” (p. 9). Rodriquez (1993) claims that “No one can stand gangs. Everyone wants to get rid of them” (p. xv). He adds that the necessary research to understand these students is not being done. He concludes that the problem of gangs is “consistent and growing” (p. 7).

The issues surrounding the presence of gangs in schools may go beyond the graffiti, the school violence, and the missed educational opportunities. Taylor (1990)

stated 20 years ago, “The most disturbing factor, though, extends beyond youth gangs” (p. 36). He explains that his study revealed a “new psyche” of gang members who he believes may be impossible to “change, control, or even understand” (p. 36). In-depth gang research is vital in that interviewing gang members and hearing their stories may help explain this phenomenon.

Often there is the misconception that gangs only exist in cities. However, the cultural phenomenon of youth gangs is everywhere. When considering the modern view of gangs in schools, it is important to realize gang growth in rural areas. Resulting from the widespread acceptance of gang culture, gang growth is no longer a problem only for urban schools. Evans, Fitzgerald, Weigel, and Chvilicek (1999) report that gang activity has become present in both rural and suburban areas. This team learned that rural students felt that their schools were safer than urban schools, but that gang activity was still present. In their research comparing and contrasting rural and urban gangs, there were no significant differences discovered. There was no difference reported in pressure to join gangs, and only a small difference in the number of students who reported knowing members of a gang. Klein and Maxson (2006), who researched gangs almost 10 years later, agree that the problem of youth gangs is not just in urban America. “Since 1980, no single aspect of street gang existence has captured more attention than the emergence of gangs in literally thousands of previously unaffected communities” (Klein & Maxson, 2006, p. 19). Their research provides yet another reason why attention must be paid to these students.

It is important to understand the world that gangbangers live in. “G-Roc,” a gang member from Bing’s (1991) study, makes the profound statement, “It don’t

matter what you say about gangbanging', you know don't matter if anybody understand it or not. We just bringing home the hate. 'Cause everybody one-eight-seven. That's the kind of world we live in. [sic]" (p. 207). "G-roc" has just stated in gang slang that everyone must be killed.

Research Questions

Existing research demonstrates the difficulty of educating gang members in schools and the negative effects of gangs on both the school culture and the students who attend. To assess whether there is any way to educate gang members in a school environment, it is important to first understand the perspective of students who are in gangs.

My goal was to answer the following questions:

1. How do students who are gang members perceive schooling?
2. How do students who are gang members perceive their teachers?
3. If a student in a gang experiences caring in school, what does this care look like?

Design and Methods

Gathering information on this topic was a difficult task as there are so many definitions for "gang" and "gang violence." In addition, gang research has only been in existence since the 1980s, and research on gangs in schools did not begin until more recently. Since the late 1990s, gang research has even decreased. Much of the data seems to vary from resource to resource, but one fact remains constant: gangs are a threat to the school environment and must be studied.

This study is a qualitative study on the perspectives of gang members of both their schooling experiences and their teachers. It examined gang members' stories in

an attempt to shed light on their lives and to provide an understanding of their views. Using the information gathered in the literature review, I designed questions to ask gang members about their school experiences and teachers. This data was compiled in stories and statements and then will be analyzed to gather implications for teachers in the classroom.

By using narrative research, the study will present the views of the students. Narrative research provides a careful, in-depth examination of people (Jalongo & Isenburg, 1995). Through this type of research, my hope is that teachers will be aided in relating to the issues they are dealing in classrooms and develop their own solutions to difficult situations that stem from teaching gang members.

By careful examination of the interviews and stories that the gang members offer, I have painted a picture of gang members' perspectives on their schooling experiences and educators. It was not my intention to just compile stories, but to use the stories that the students share to analyze classroom situations that many teachers face. This analysis and links to current research helped to formulate suggestions for teachers to better reach this population of students.

Definition of Terms

At-risk – term used to describe youth who are “at-risk” of failing out of school

Bags – a street term for drugs

Bangin' or Gangbangin' – gang activity

Bling-bling – expensive and flashy jewelry worn by some gang members

Cats – members of the gang

Crews – affectionate term for gang

Colors – the color that a gang uses to identify membership

Dog – to hurt, to do violence against someone

Down – positive term meaning “good”

Flag – a bandana in the gang color that a gang member wears to show allegiance

Gangs – three or more persons who share a common identity, usually through a gang name, involved in illegal activities

Gangbanger – name for gang member

Hard or Hardcore – a term to describe a gang member’s status

Homies – members of the gang

Hood – neighborhood

Jahnke – an term used in place of any word, usually used when the speaker cannot remember the correct word

Joint – prison or a marijuana cigarette

One-eight-seven – police radio code for murder, gang phrase to threaten to murder

Set – a gang

Sign – usually refers to a hand signal made by gang members to identify their allegiance or to insult another gang

Streets – the area surrounding the homes of students where gang members socialize, do drug deals, tag their gang names, and fight for territory

Tag – to paint gang name or symbols, graffiti

Thugs – a hoodlum or member of the gang

Wanna-be – a student who wants to be in a gang but is not an official member

Wasted – to get beat up or murdered

Chapter 2: Voices of the Past and the Present

Introduction

While gangs have long been present in society, it is only since the 1980s that this presence has reached public consciousness. As can be seen with clothing and music fads, the influence of gangs has trickled into both public and private school systems. However, the influence of gangs is more than clothing fads and rap music. The compelling power and effects of gangs in schools are a complex problem.

This research takes an in-depth look at gangs and the gang-like cultures that are rampant in both modern entertainment and in the culture of school systems. Even though students who only dress or identify with the gang culture are not usually dangerous, there are aspects of the culture and climate that is associated with gangs that can become dangerous in schools if gangster-like actions or gang attire are misinterpreted. When discussing gangs in schools, often teachers and administrators cannot make a distinction between students who are inducted members of gangs and those who are merely identifying with the culture. Therefore, for the purposes of this research, the term “gang member” and students with gang-like behavior are used interchangeably, as the issues arising from these youths can be the same. Often the effect on the classroom is the same whether or not a student is an inducted gang member or merely acting like a gang member. It is important to note, however, that I only interviewed students who were known gang members; students who merely identified with the culture were not included in the interview sample.

Gathering information on this topic is a difficult task as there are so many definitions for “gang” and “gang violence.” “There is no single definition, although every definition includes some mention of the word *group*” (Delaney, 2006, p. 6).

Research on gangs is problematic because of the wide range of definitions; some definitions include criminal activity, the importance of territoriality, symbols of allegiance, or specifics on age or race. Therefore, tracking statistics is problematic as well as painting a clear picture of the historical aspects of gangs. In addition, although most gang research started sometime in the 1980s (McCorkle & Miethe, 2002), gang research in schools has only just begun. Most information on gangs in schools was collected after 1989. Much of the data may seem to vary from resource to resource, but one fact remains the same: gangs are a real threat to the school environment and a phenomenon that must be studied.

The study of this culture cannot begin without a clear picture of a gang member. In Chapter I, I offered a definition of “gangs.” However, to understand the complexity of the gang scene it is important to add to that definition. First, it is imperative to understand the definition of delinquency, which is a factor to all juvenile gangs. Shoemaker (2009) defines delinquency to include both serious criminal activity, such as drive-bys and theft, and non-criminal activity such as “running away from home, truancy from school, and disobeying the lawful commands of parents or legal guardians (p. 3). Considering this definition, gangs can also be classified delinquent but not criminal.

In his book *American Street Gangs*, Delaney (2006) asks the reader, “Are gang members mostly inner-city minority males who love to fight, wear certain clothing, have tattoos, wear bling-bling, and sell drugs? In many cases, the answer is “yes” to all these stereotypical images of gangs” (Delaney, 2006, p. 8). For the purposes of this study, the students who will be interviewed will fit into the above description of a “stereotypical” gang member. In addition, to follow the definition of

“gang” as prescribed by the Virginia Code, the students who will be interviewed will also be members of a criminal gang, not just a delinquent group.

Delaney adds that although there are many students who fit into this stereotypical image of gangs, there are a “wide variety of gangs and gang members” (Delaney, 2006, p. 8). He lists examples such as motorcycle gangs, organized crime rings, the Ku Klux Klan, skinheads, prison gangs, the Mexican Mafia, the Texas Syndicate, the Aryan Brotherhood, The Neta Association, The Black Guerilla Family, and La Nuestra Familia. All of these groups are categorized as “gangs,” however; they have characteristics that do not correspond to the typical gang member stereotype as detailed above. For these reasons, no members of the above groups will be interviewed in this study.

According to Franzese, Covey, and Menard (2006), gangs will consist of a small core of between five and 25. This core is the most active in the gang activities of the community and set the standards for the remaining gang membership. For the purposes of this study, the gang members who were interviewed were members of neighborhood gangs who have this core leadership running the gang participation in the community and the schools.

Although there are females who participate in gangs, most of the gang participation in America is from males. There is evidence that female gang members are as violent as male members; generally speaking, however, the girls who are in gangs commit fewer violent crimes than their male counterparts (Delaney, 2006). Delaney (2006), states that female gang members spend most of their time “just hanging out” (p. 213). However, he adds that these girls are delinquents by

implication and may be a part of the criminal acts of the gang. For the purposes of this study, only male gang members will be interviewed.

As noted in Chapter I, increased participation in gang activity among school-aged students is accompanied by a larger cultural shift—the prevalence, acceptance, and mainstreaming of gangs. Some of the youth culture in America today is centered on a prevalent “gang-like” mentality. These values and behaviors, which are shown on television and in movies, are often mirrored through student dress and behavior in public schools. The stereotypical male gang member who has been presented only sketches an outline of what it means to be a gang member; and more important, it is only a hint of how a gang member or many gang members can change the culture of a school.

As noted earlier, the gang influence that holds the biggest concern for educators is gang-related violence. Researchers report that a majority of schools in America are plagued with youth crime, including aggressive behaviors and weapons in schools (Stone, 2000). Gang activity in school may disrupt the classroom and perhaps provide a threat to the safety of students and staff (Franzese, Covey & Menard, 2006). Aggressive student behavior from gang members may divert a teacher’s attention from instruction and cause him or her to spend excessive time on discipline.

In addition, Bowling-Sender (1998) reports that gang attire can interfere with the school day. By wearing a gang’s accepted color, a student shows his allegiance. This can be intimidating and may cause many types of disruptions, like fights with rival gangs, which may even lead to injury or even death. To add to the concern of potential gang fights is the intimidation factor to non-gang members and teachers.

Fear of the gangs in the school may cause some students to avoid participation in class. Gang colors worn in schools also undermine authority if there is a dress code in place (Bowling-Sendor, 1998).

Gang influences in schools are a concern for educators because of gang activity negatively affecting the school day. The school day begins at the time a student walks up to the bus stop and ends when he or she is home from after-school activities. Students may be affected by gangs not only at the bus stop, but also when participating in after school clubs and sports. Gangs have the potential to affect both the physical and emotional well being of students and change the culture of the school (Delaney, 2006).

Another important point to address is the misconception that gangs only exist in urban areas. “Gangs are everywhere. They exist in all 50 American states, in all socioeconomic classes, and in all racial and ethnic groups” (Delaney, 2006, p. 12). As stated in Chapter I, gang growth is no longer a problem restricted to urban schools. Evans, Fitzgerald, Weigel, and Chvilicek (1999) report that gang activity has become present in rural and suburban areas. Research comparing and contrasting rural and urban gangs discovered no significant differences. There was no difference found in pressure to join gangs, and only a small difference in the number of students who reported knowing members of a gang.

As youth enter schools, the decision whether or not to join a gang becomes important. Each student entering school is working through the process of belonging and finding a place in the school and community. Many students who have grown up in families wrought with violence, neglect, and drug abuse choose the path of gang membership to find the “respect” that is missing from their lives. Often gang

members believe that this respect is gained by instilling fear in people; violence and crime tend to be tactics to achieve this fear (Gerler, 2004). This tactic to earn respect is used when gang members think they have no other viable options to earn it.

Delaney (2006) notes that joining a gang offers many of the same benefits as joining an ethnic club. The gang shares rituals, has common beliefs, views their community in a similar manner, has a strong sense of family, and has similar values. “Through such associations as gang membership, individuals develop a sense of self. Gang membership helps to fill the void resulting from whatever is missing in the lives of so many troubled youth, young adults, and life-long gangsters” (Delaney, 2006, p. 1).

The research on gangs mostly examines membership in gangs and offers intervention programs and suggestions for prevention. Some of the intervention methods may be effective in dealing with the aftermath of gangs; more can be done to help not only the students indirectly affected by gang activity, but also the students who are involved in the gang activity in school.

Historical Perspective

To gain a better insight into modern gangs, it is important to look at gangs from a historical perspective. Franzese, Covey, and Menard (2006) state that “If we are to develop an adequate understanding of juvenile gangs, it is essential that we know not only what exists here and now, but how present day American gangs differ from gangs in other times and places” (p. 108).

Today’s juvenile gangs can trace their origins back to the late 1900s. Many scholars agree, however, that “true juvenile gangs” appeared in the United States as early as the 19th century (Franzese, Covey, & Menard, 2006, p. 111). However, the existence of gangs can be traced back as early as 354 A.D. In his journals, Saint

Augustine writes of a type of adolescent gang and details his criminal activities as a member of a group of youth. Historians also agree that gangs were common in the 14th and 15th centuries; during the Middle Ages, there was evidence of groups of adolescents forming into groups and participating in illegal activities for material gain (Franzese, Covey, & Menard, 2006).

Knox (1994) states that criminal gangs in the United States existed as early as 1760. He adds that gangs during this time were emerging from racial and ethnic groups. Franzese, Covey, and Menard (2006) agree that there is evidence of gangs in the 17th and 18th century in New England. There were newspaper accounts of a group of boys “creating problems” for citizens in Philadelphia (p. 111). Apparently, citizens met to address the problem of the gang who were fighting, stealing, drinking, and reading sexually oriented material.

Shoemaker (2009) writes that gangs began to increase in number and expand throughout the United States during the 1830s. According to Delaney (2006), it was during the early 1800s that New York was plagued with gang formation and activity. The early 1800s gave birth to what is now known as a “street gang” that was mostly formed by immigrants. When the Erie Canal opened in 1825, New York grew rapidly in population; this population included immigrants. The Irish immigrants of the Five Points neighborhood banded together and formed the first documented gang in the United States, the Forty Thieves (Shoemaker, 2009). In 1850, there were an estimated 30,000 gang members who gathered in the streets. Ironically, it was also these street gangs that directly shaped the outcome of New York’s political elections (Delaney, 2006). The power that a gang could hold was becoming evident.

By the 1870s, New York's media reported growing concerns with juvenile gangs (Franzese, Covey, & Menard, 2006). According to the press, these juveniles "terrorized citizens and committed crimes" (p. 112). However, New York was not the only state reporting gang problems. Philadelphia continued to have a growing number of gangs and gang activity (Delaney, 2006, p. 38).

According to McCorkle and Miethe (2002), in the early 19th century two-thirds of the population in large cities on the east coast was immigrants. The mass immigration to America caused men to congregate with groups like themselves. These men battled over turf or engaged in criminal activity for the challenge (McCorkle & Miethe, 2002). The Civil War period led to the organization of gangs, specifically groups who were opposed to the draft riots (Delaney, 2006). In addition, newspapers followed gang activity and reported that during this time some gangs used drugs. Cocaine was the popular drug of choice, although morphine and heroin were also used heavily by gang members (McCorkle & Miethe, 2002). The drug use of gang members was more predominant in the post Civil War period because of new technological innovations that were discovered (Delaney, 2006). The men in gangs easily acquired and used the drugs.

It is with the early gangs that gang dress, tagging to mark territory, and violent acts began. Just like today, all it took was a group of unattached, armed men in a group for violence to break out (McCorkle & Miethe, 2002). Then when the 20th century arrived, more criminal gangs developed and spread. In the early 1900s, the United States experienced the spread of gangs into many urban cities in both the Northeast and Midwest (Delaney, 2006). It was during this time that there was an increase in the violence associated with these groups. The late 1920s held the

Chicago Gang Wars, where 350 to 450 murders occurred. A little later in the early 1930s, African American gangs emerged on the east side of Los Angeles (Delaney, 2006). These groups were known for territorial battles and for causing trouble in the streets. It is important to note that gangs began to form based on race and socioeconomic status (McCorkle & Miethe, 2002).

During the 1920s and 1930s, the membership in gangs was mostly children of recent immigrants or the small groups of African American gangs that had begun to form. Jewish gangs were on the rise; one of the most notorious gangs called the Purple Gang developed in Detroit (Shoemaker, 2009). This gang was responsible for most of the liquor sales in this area during Prohibition.

Franzese, Covey, and Menard (2006) report that the 1940s were filled with concerns about juvenile crimes; this concern led to increased attention on juvenile gangs. It was during this time that the “zoot suit” fad began. Zoot suits were a style of dress among minority youth; the zoot suit consisted of baggy pants, broad shoulder jackets, long chains, and wide brimmed hats. It is easy to see how the zoot suit shaped the style of today’s modern gang (Franzese, Covey, & Menard, 2006).

During the 1940s, there were also many reports of juvenile gangs in Harlem. These gangs were composed of youth ages 10-18 and gang leaders who were usually 15-20 years old. These gangs were noted as hostile toward non-gang members, participation in delinquent activity, and sometimes committing crimes of theft and mugging (Franzese, Covey, & Menard, 2006).

During this time, the Chicago press documented African American gangs who were considered to be “fighting gangs” (Franzese, Covey, & Menard, 2006, p. 119). Delaney (2006) wrote about gangs in Los Angeles between 1940 and 1960, noting

how gangs began to organize and grow. Mexican American gangs formed and organized as well as African American gangs. Race wars, drug wars, and territory battles would erupt in this state. Within a few decades, Los Angeles would be the “gang capital of the world” (Delaney, 2006, p. 52).

Popular images of gangs began to appear on the big screen in the 1950s. Often these gang members were portrayed as chain carrying delinquents who wore black leather jackets (Franzese, Covey, & Menard, 2006). The 1950s were also a time when the “Supergangs” began to develop. Supergangs are the large and well known gangs that exist in many cities throughout the United States and that have organizational hierarchies; a few examples of Supergangs include the Latin Kings, The Bloods, The Crips, and the Gangster Disciples.

It was also during the 1950s that a traditional gang structure that is often seen today began to develop. This structure consisted of two types of gang membership, core membership and fringe membership (Klein, 1995). Core members consisted of those gang members who were more involved in crime and who were more active in gang activity. Most gangs consist of one-third to one-half core members. Fringe members are the members who were less involved in gang crime. These members usually were in the gang to socialize (Klein, 1995).

Gangs of the 1950s demonstrated a “worrisome level of potential violence in the gang world” (Klein, 1995, p. 69). Drive-by shootings were not uncommon during this period, even though many believe drive-bys did not begin until later in the 1980s. However, it is noted that while firearms were present, earlier gangs did rely less on them for crime. Most of the gang violence committed by 50s gangs consisted of violence toward other gang members or rival gang members. The victims of gang

violence were not innocent bystanders, but victims who “look much like the suspects” (Klein, 1995, p. 69). Crimes were committed against people from the same neighborhood that was similar in social status and race.

The 1960s seem to have held less gang activity than previous decades. Many scholars believe that the draft and Vietnam War kept gangs from being active as so many young men were being sent out to war. However, it was during the 60s that many African American gangs began to become politically active in civil rights (Franzese, Covey, & Menard, 2006). These gangs also began to form alliances and more Supergangs developed (Delaney, 2006). One gang leader stated in an interview with sociologist Venkatesh (2008) that he wanted his gang to be more like the gangs of the 60s. He said that he wanted to return his Black Kings to “the glory days of the 1960s when South Side gangs worked together with residents to agitate for improvements in their neighborhoods” (p. 75).

The 1970s held a resurgence of gang growth and activity (Franzese, Covey, & Menard, 2006). As a result of the rising gang populations, by the late 1970s gang theories and intervention programs were developed and implemented. It seemed like the problem of violent gangs was being “solved” as a few law enforcement agencies reacted to the growing rates of gang related crime. Then, in the 1980s because of media and a rise in gang research, gangs were re-discovered (McCorkle & Miethe, 2002). Police began to report a sharp rise in gang-related activities. The media was filled with stories of gang violence and gang crime. It was as if gang membership in the United States exploded. This explosion has continued until today.

Gangs were present in the past and still exist in modern times. Throughout the history of gangs, it is demonstrated that youth formed these groups to increase

their odds of survival (Delaney, 2006). Delaney notes that the, “largest percentage of gang members came from disadvantaged ethnic and racial groups” (p. 59). Today, gangs are larger, seek more territory, and have become mobile with guns and drugs; a gang in a community can be more dangerous to schools (Delaney, 2006). Their existence has become more prevalent in society as well as in schools. This news is a concern for parents, teachers, and administrators in most parts of the United States.

Historical and Contemporary Gang Characteristics

For the purposes of this research, classical gangs are gangs before 1970 and contemporary gangs are gangs from 1970 to present time. There are many similarities when examining both contemporary and classical gangs, but there are also some notable differences. Delaney (2006) states that for historical gangs, their primary concern was protecting their own gang members and protecting their turf. He notes a change in this priority that took place from the mid-1960s to the early 1970s. During this time, gangs became more “offensive” with their activities, trying to gain more territory and more control. These gangs began to use more violent means to achieve these goals (Delaney, 2006, p. 59).

Franzese, Covey, and Menard (2006) note that early gang members were mostly in conflict with each other and engaged in street brawls, theft, gambling, and robbery. According to these researchers, gang characteristics of the early time included gang members from homogeneous groups from lower class neighborhoods and broken homes. These characteristics are still somewhat in place today, however, Franzese, Covey, and Menard (2006) add that a change occurred in the 19th century. These researchers note that gangs became well organized and held regular meetings. Much of these characteristics have carried over to modern gangs as well.

Grinie (2008), in his book *The Way Out*, documents a shift in gang characteristics that began in the 1950s, shortly after the end of World War II. He states that since World War II, gang members have become younger and are more involved in drug activity. He adds that gang membership shifted to membership of primarily non-white youth; most gang members after the war are African American, Hispanic, or Mexican American. He states that gang structure became more organized and rigid and that firearms are more commonly used in modern gangs.

According to Franzese, Covey, and Menard (2006), mutual protection and economic gain are reoccurring themes in gangs in both historical and modern membership. Since the 19th century, gang membership has focused on problems in the environment of lower class youth. Lastly, alcohol abuse has been prevalent in both classic and contemporary gangs.

Most concerning to public schools is the potential violence that gangs can bring into a school system. From a historical perspective, gang violence began as early as the 19th century with robberies, assaults, and street fights (McCorkle & Miethe, 2002). Franzese, Covey, and Menard (2006) note that gang violence is a characteristic of gangs that has existed throughout history. However, there are some differences gang violence of the past and present.

Venkatesh (2008) spent time talking to gang members and community members in a sociological study of gangs in Chicago. One member of the projects was sitting in the park and had some thoughts about how gangs in his neighborhood had changed. He stated, "The Panthers had breakfast programs for kids, but these gangs just shoot 'em and feed 'em drugs" (Venkatesh, 2008, p. 6). Another neighbor stated, "In the old days, a teenager with an appetite for trouble might have gotten

involved in vandalism or shoplifting; now he is more likely to be involved in the drug trade. And a neighbor who might have yelled at that misbehaving teenager in the old days is less likely to do so since that kid might be carrying a gun” (Venkatesh, 2008, p. 72). Both of these quotes highlight a cultural shift in gangs.

In classical gangs violent acts were based on questions of loyalty or loss of honor. If another gang challenged the belief system or integrity of a rival gang, a fight would occur. Gangs fought for their individual honor, for the honor of their gang members, or to save their reputation. In addition, classical gangs fought for territory or to climb the hierarchy of the gang (McCorkles & Miethe, 2002).

In classical gangs, the community at large was often involved in violent acts. For example, there were organized “duals” or “rumbles.” Often the older generation would step in and redirect violence if it began to escalate out of control. Gangs openly recognized the community-based authority of older generation gang members. In the 1960s and the 1970s, most of the gang violence that occurred was mostly directed toward each other or members of rival gangs (Martinez, 2003).

Before the 1980s, gangs followed a certain ethical code of territory and gang loyalty, and to break this code was dishonorable. It was the gang code and a gang pact. In classical times, it was all about individual and gang honor, or the belief in the actions of the gang. Today, sometimes violence may result from trying to maintain the gang’s belief system; contemporary gangs also display violence when individual “respect” is challenged. Anderson (1999) explains, “the heart of the code is the issue of respect – loosely defined as being treated right” (p. 33). Violence can erupt if a rival gang member merely looks at someone the wrong way or mutters a comment under his breath, showing “disrespect” to another person from one’s gang.

The culture of respect is at the center of most modern gang activities. Delaney (2006) states that in contemporary gangs, respect is the highest value of all gang members. He adds, “Any sign of disrespect show toward a gang, or gang members, will result in retaliation with extreme prejudice (Delaney, 2006, p. 150).

Anderson (1999) details in his book *Code of the Street* that the street code of conduct is regulated by the threat of violence. As gang members campaign for respect through various violent actions and conflicts, the modern day “code of the street” emerges. He states, “of all the problems besetting the poor inner city black community, none is more pressing than that of interpersonal violence and aggression” (Anderson, 1999, p. 32). Franzese, Covey, and Menard (2006) add that contemporary gangs use more lethal forms of violence more often to protect the code of the gang.

To expand on the idea of “respect,” in contemporary gangs territory battles may commence if drugs sales are involved. However, more violence occurs as a result of being disrespected (McCorkles & Miethe, 2002). Disrespect can come in many forms; something as simple as entering a convenient store to buy a soda on the wrong side of town may be considered disrespectful. Logan (2009) wrote an account of the violent street gang MS-13. When discussing violence and respect, he states, “Once the violence had started, it didn’t stop. One act of disrespect had to be answered by a show of strength. That show of strength was another act of disrespect. This cycle of violence continued until one gang became dominant” (Logan, 2009, p. 97). Contemporary gangs are more about securing self-esteem and maintaining individual or the gang’s respect in their social world (Gerler, 2004) while classic gangs functioned more by honoring gang tradition and the name of the gang.

Unfortunately, in contemporary gangs, not only have the reasons behind the violence changed, but also the target of the violence. During the late 1980s and throughout the 1990s, the “explosive combination of drugs as well as the unprecedented increase of high powered weapons on the streets transformed street violence into something more dangerous” (Martinez, 2003, p. 101). The target of violence has moved from individual gang members to entire groups of gang members, and then to the community where the gang lives. Another factor is that some of the violence occurs for no reason except that the gang members are looking for trouble or trying to earn “respect” in the eyes of their fellow gang members. Often part of the gang initiation process is committing a random act of violence.

O'Dell, an 18-year-old gang member who was interviewed in Taylor's (1990)

Dangerous Society, makes the following statement:

I like to bust heads. Violence? What's that? You got to dog everybody or they gonna dog you. Doggin' is my specialty. I'm the dog master. I dogs men, boys, girls, bitches, my momma, teachers, policemen, policebitches, my momma's boyfriends. I'll just see somebody and start doggin' them in the street. Me and boys like to crush mugs and kick ass at school, in the bathrooms, gym, or locker room [sic]. (p.56)

Another important piece of gang history is the rivalry between the two best known gangs in America, the Bloods and the Crips. The Bloods and the Crips have been known to be among the largest and most violent street gangs in the United States (Martinez, 2003). These two gangs have been present in both classical and contemporary gang history. The two west coast influenced “sets” got started in the late 1960s (Martinez, 2003) to mid 1970s (Knox, 1994). No one knows about their origins or how these two gangs received their names, although there are several suggestions and stories that have been shared throughout the years. The accounts

differ from one gang to another, from one set to another, and among different generations of gangs. However, one factor that remains consistent in most accounts is that these gangs were formed in reaction to their communities and the need to find protection from external violence (Martinez, 2003). The theme of gang violence is once again revisited.

Historically, although the character of gang activity has changed, especially in relation to the violence (Venkatesh, 2003), the gangs themselves have not really changed (McCorkle & Miethe, 2002). Researchers have not adequately explained why there are certain aspects of gangs that have remained relatively unchanged despite the constantly changing societies around them (Venkatesh, 2003). What has seemingly changed, however, is the number of youth turning toward gang involvement.

Since the 1980s no single aspect of street gangs has captured more attention than the large numbers of students becoming involved in gangs. Gangs have emerged in thousands of previously unaffected communities and membership has increased in mass numbers (Klein & Maxson, 2006). Young teens are joining gangs to fulfill needs not being met within home environments. This is demonstrated by the number of youth involved in gangs, which has grown dramatically over the years. The increase in gang involvement can be seen in data derived from many sources. In 2007, Vittori published an article in *The Journal of Gang Research* quoting statistics from The National Youth Gang Center. According to this source, there are currently 731,500 gang members in the United States who belong to 21,500 gangs. In addition, this survey also reports that ALL cities with populations of 250,000 or more state that they have a youth gang problem (Vittori, 2007).

The 2005 National Gang Threat Assessment reports that there is a new type of gang with no affiliation with traditional boundaries of alliances and rivalries. This report also states that gangs are becoming more sophisticated in their ways of hiding from law enforcement and in their use of technology to commit crimes. In addition, gangs are moving rapidly across the country leaving a path of crime and violence. These moves are causing new gangs to form and conflicts with already established gangs in new areas. Add to these shifting patterns the immigrant populations in the United States, and more and more groups of gangs are forming (National Gang Threat Assessment, 2006). These gangs are also recruiting and organizing within schools.

Youth gangs emerging in schools across America are a symptom of more complex problems in society (Huff & Trump, 1996). The prevalence of gangs in contemporary America reflects a breakdown of healthy home structures, communities, and schools (Ozimo, Ozimo & Honda, 1997). According to Taylor (1990), the erosion of the family and family values has had a “domino effect” on the growth of these gangs. Research reveals that the “overall deterioration of the community is exacerbated by youngsters involved in major crime” (Taylor, 1990, p. 75). America has more youth gangs, more gang member drug trafficking, and more gang violence than ever before.

As stated by Taylor, however, the most disturbing factor extends beyond the gangs. This study revealed a “new psyche of urban youth that may be nearly impossible to change, control, or even understand. This new psyche or mind set is self-destructive to the individual as well as devastating to society as a whole” (Taylor, 1990, p. 36). This statement brings up many questions about contemporary gang members.

Contemporary Gangs and Schools

Griffin and Meacham (2002) state that gangs in schools became an epidemic in the 1980s and 1990s. These two researchers describe in their article “*Gangs in schools: An introduction to the problem and interventions*” how gangs in schools are growing. Their research describes how even small gangs that are unattached to larger organizations have begun to develop and have proved to be as much of a problem as the larger, well-know gangs such as the Bloods and Crips. It is when these small gangs, often referred to as “homegrown gangs,” become powerful within a school that violent acts begin to occur.

The first thing to be considered is that in order to have a gang, there must be students who are willing to join it despite the risks and potential consequences of joining a group who commits illegal acts. According to the research, there are many factors that may cause teenagers to join gangs. Kontos (2003), in his introduction to *Gangs and Society*, indicates that some of the reasons students join gangs include peer pressure, poverty or a desire to make money, to gain respect, to be attractive to the opposite sex, or for a sense of belonging or protection. It is difficult to pinpoint the exact reasons unless one speaks to gang members individually and draws conclusions on a case by case basis. It is understood that most students who join gangs are missing something in their lives that being a part of the gang seems to provide. However, no researcher can deny that for whatever the reasons students join gangs, the gangs and gang culture influence schools.

Essentially gangs are delinquent groups of adolescents. Delinquent or criminal gangs have an objective to make money or to survive in their communities. To achieve these objectives, gang members will participate in both delinquent and

criminal activity (Shoemaker, 2009). Thrasher (1927) states, “The gang is a conflict group. It develops through strife and thrives on warfare (p. 116).

As a gang, research has shown that the group structure of a gang is a product of the social interactions of the youth (Whyte, 1981). From the interactions of the boys arises a “system of mutual obligations which is fundamental to group cohesion” (Whyte, 1981, p. 256). Gang members become close and treat each other as family. The delinquent group tends to develop its own rules that the members abide by; conduct within a gang is regulated by gang leaders who attempt to control the behaviors of its members (Shaw, 1968).

Generally speaking, gangs will have their own group of heroes. These heroes will consist of other gang members who have gained prestige and power through acts of violence. The younger members of the gang will emulate these older and powerful members. The leaders and heroes will have more control over an individual gang member’s conduct. Ironically, gang control is often more effective than his parents’ control (Shaw, 1968).

When students join gangs, there are different levels of membership that can affect the culture of a school. As discussed previously, there are core gang members and fringe members (Klein, 2006). Core members are the most active and engaged in criminal activities whereas the fringe members are simply part of the group and have friendships with other gang members. In gangs, both historical and contemporary, each member has a status and responsibility for the group. Thrasher (1927) stated, “Every member of a gang tends to have a definite status within the group” (p. 228). He adds that every member in a gang will be assigned a name according to his personality. This serves to help the gang member identify with the group and to

distribute work for each gang member. “Every person in the group performs his characteristic function with reference to the others” (Thrasher, 1927, p. 229). Lastly, fighting is one of the ways that a gang member will receive rank and status. “Each member is usually rated on the basis of his fistic ability (Thrasher, 1927, p. 232).

Dance (2002) states that there are three variations of “gangsters” that fill the hallways of modern schools. Each of these types of students can impact the day to day operations of schools and the classroom environment. First, there are teenagers who are known as “hard” or “hardcore” gang members (Dance, 2002, p. 52). These students are street-savvy and tough in the eyes of their peers. Usually, these students have committed criminal and violent acts that have given them respect and a reputation. This type of student is also usually involved in the “illicit aspects of street culture” (Dance, 2002, p. 52). The second type of gang member is a “hardcore wannabe” (Dance, 2002, p. 52). These students are trying to “act hard” in schools because it is fashionable or prestigious. Usually students in this category have little or no actual gang involvement, they merely relate to the street culture. However, Dance notes that these students may become dangerous if they are placed in a position of trying to defend themselves or their gangster persona. Thompson (2000) reiterates this by stating “...school officials must accept the fact that wanna-be gang members can be more of a threat to safety and school security than actual gang members. Wanna-be gang members often commit more acts of violence than actual gang members because they feel a need to impress others” (p. 66). Lastly, according to Dance, there is the “hardcore enough” category of gang members (Dance, 2002, p.52). These students are street-savvy and tough enough to convince their peers that they could be violent or ruthless if they had to be. Most of the time, these students

will not engage in violent acts because they do not have to do so. According to Dance, a student considered “hardcore enough” usually “avoids participation in the negative aspects of street culture but lives in neighborhoods where illicit activities take place” (Dance, 2002, p. 52).

With all three of these types of students in schools, it is difficult for a teacher or administrator to judge who is dangerous, who could be dangerous, and who chooses not to be dangerous. Taylor (1990) quotes a high school teacher who says, “You can’t really expect me or any teacher to function under the stress of drugs, gangs, and unruly students...I’m just going through the motions and I hate it” (Taylor, 1990, p. 86). A high school senior from the same study was asked about the gang problem at his school. He replies, “Teachers know, security knows, janitors know, principals and counselors know, but what can they do?” (Taylor, 1990, p. 81) A cafeteria worker states that students at her school join gangs and run around their school because it is “their chance to be a star” (Taylor, 1990, p. 87). An elementary school teacher says that at her school “...all these students think about is money, money and big cars, and they’re not even old enough to drive. It’s simply that the role models for many of these kids are the successful drug people” (Taylor, 1990, p. 77).

So the problem of gangs and gang influences are recognized by most staff at the schools. Thompkins (2000) outlines in his study that when gangs first appear on school campuses, they become bullies and the level of fear that other students have for them escalates. Then school officials begin to take notice. He states that the reaction of most school officials to the presence of gangs in schools is an atmosphere of “us versus them” (Thompkins, 2000, p. 63). He explains that this reaction from

school administrators give the gangs in the school more power and greater credibility in the eyes of their peers. “As real and suspected gang members are singled out and punished for what is determined to be gang behavior, students may come to fear gangs even more” (Thompkins, 2000, p. 63).

Thompkins continues by adding that when gangs become a foundation in schools, the levels of violence usually increase as rival gangs compete for space and respect. When organized gangs exist, a message of distrust and invasion continues to increase the power of the gangs as the members play not only on the fear of other students, but also of the teachers as well (Thompkins, 2000). There is fear, and yet at times some teachers will not even pay attention to the warning signs that there are gangs in their school. Paton (1998) told of a school he visited where a fight broke out during an assembly when one gang members stepped on the shoe of a rival gang member. When he spoke to the teachers, they had not noticed any gang members signing to each other or exchanges before violence erupted. “One student teacher failed to notice an exchange between rival gang members in her room until several of her students jumped out of their seats and started pushing each other” (Paton, 1998, p. 67).

Often gang members will commit acts of violence on school grounds because they are trying to gain respect, are defending themselves, or out of fear of their gang or rival gangs. In addition, the research notes that sometimes gang members will admit to violent acts even if their group did not commit the crime. Thompkins (2000) states that gang members or wanna-be gang members will take credit for these acts to be recognized. Williams (2005) describes how, after a group session on violence, the students who were in gangs walked out of the classroom and a fight broke out

between two rival gangs. “Perhaps students in a culture where violence was so important needed to maintain the status quo after such lessons by fighting” (p. 11).

In her research, Williams (2005) spoke to many students about their involvement in gangs and the violence that surrounds it. She tells of young Julius, who was expelled from school because he brought a knife to class. He was a member of one of the toughest gangs in his neighborhood; he joined this gang for protection after he was shot at several times in his neighborhood. She describes students who feel that their lives will not change. One seventh grader states, “It’s just the way it is. There ain’t nothing I can do about it, so why should I sit around and worry about it, we all gotta die sometime [sic]” (Williams, 2005, p. 41).

School violence is the concern that drives many school systems to act on gang prevention and intervention. Children who are involved in gangs may carry weapons to school to protect themselves from aggressors or to impress their friends or other gang members. It is a multi-faceted problem that is enhanced by the many layers of gang membership. This leads to the dual issues of gang members attending schools. When the gang members commit acts of violence, bully other students, destroy or tag property, learning is disrupted. In addition to the disruption of learning, students can suffer fear and stress as a result of being in a gang or being around students who are in gangs. It is a cycle that will continue as long as “gangs are able to dominate a community or school” (Thompkins, 2000, p. 65). Thompkins makes the statement that gangs will dominate as long as “people are afraid to confront them or afraid to resist their presence and influence” (Thompkins, 2000, p. 65).

Fear of gangs and gang members by teachers and administrators often leads to students failing in school. Finn (1996) notes that because some teachers fear them

and some administrators label them, “The place where there could be positive intervention—the school—often emerges as yet another setting for the display of prejudice” (p. 72). She notes that gang members are often marginal learners and states “Marginal learners are the kids who, in some part of their lives, are experiencing turmoil so significant that it interferes with the way they perceive themselves—a factor which, in turn, conditions them to take their place on the periphery” (Finn, 1996, p. 28).

Gang members may cause problems in classrooms across the United States, however, they still need an education and an opportunity for a diploma. “We as educators must be concerned about gangs because their members are our students; the behaviors they bring in classrooms affect the learning of all” (Finn, 1996, p. 68). Gang members can be frightening to educators, yet they “are still our children. If we fail them, they will probably be lost; if we serve them, they might be saved. Schools – overcrowded, overloaded, overcommitted, and imperfect – are still our best hope for children living on the margins” (Finn, 1996, p. 76). It is the alternatives that schools can offer that may give a gang member or a potential gang member an opportunity to reject what a gang has to offer in favor of something more positive (Thompkins, 2000).

The Ethic of Care

Research illustrates the multi-faceted issues that can result from contemporary gang members attending schools. These issues are layered even more when it is considered that many middle and high schools today are large; schools may have as many as 2,000-4,000 students enrolled. In these schools, teachers cannot distinguish

strangers from students on campus (Noddings, 2005). Many students today feel that they are not cared for in public schools (Noddings, 1999).

Finding a balance between education and care is difficult in today's schools. Like the standards initiatives and the No Child Left Behind Act, most of the focus in public education seems to be on test scores. However, as Noddings states in her book *The Challenge to Care in Schools*, to make "real changes in education and escape the dull tick-tock of pendulum swings, we have to set aside the deadly notion that the school's first priority should be intellectual development" (Noddings, 2005, p. 12). She also claims that we must abandon the idea that schools have only one goal and realize that we have a responsibility to care for our youth (Noddings, 2005). "We should want more from our educational efforts than adequate academic achievement" (Noddings, 1995, p. 675).

Noddings is a well-respected researcher on the theory of care in schools. She states that "the desire to be cared for is almost certainly a universal human characteristic" (Noddings, 2005, p. 17). Of course, students want to be cared for and want to be treated as more than a number that represents a test score.

Considering the large and diverse populations of the students in today's schools, it is not surprising that the single greatest complaint of students is that no one cares for them. These students often feel alienated from their schoolwork and separated from the adults who try to teach them (Noddings, 2005). Care must be seriously considered as a major purpose in schools to reach our students (Noddings, 1995). Children need more than just caring decisions to be made about them and their well-being; children need the attention of adults who will listen to them and their

ideas. They need adults who will “invite, guide, and support them” (Noddings, 1999, p. 13).

Caring in schools today is vital for children’s emotional and psychological growth. Caring is essential to education (Koback, 1997). There is a challenge for school administrators and teachers to provide opportunities to give and receive care. Teachers must find ways to enact care and have students receive the care at a time of standardized testing and competing expectations (Cassidy & Bates, 2005). To better illustrate care in education, it is important to examine theories of care.

According to Noddings (1999), caring is a relation. She states that there is not just an agent who cares, but a recipient of the care, the cared-for. She explains that in order for a relationship to be called a “caring relationship,” both parties must contribute to the care in characteristic ways. In other words, the person who cares must offer care that is perceived by the cared-for as a caring act in order for the care to be complete. Once the cared-for shows that the caring act has been received, it is recognized as caring. The three main characteristics of receiving the caring act is reception of the act, recognition of the act, and then response to the act (Noddings, 2005). In order for a student to feel cared for, a teacher must offer an act of care that is then received by the student. Then the student must recognize that it is a caring act and respond to the act. Only then is the act of care complete. No matter how hard teachers try to care, if the students do not perceive the act as caring then there is validity in the claim that “They don’t care” (Noddings, 2005, p. 15).

Blizek (1999) adds to the layers of this care theory by recognizing that students “being valued by others is an important part” of valuing themselves (Blizek, 1999, p. 96). He acknowledges that the attitude of others toward the student is an

important part of his or her life. “The important part of our understanding of caring that we too frequently ignore is that our attitudes or motives are as important a part of caring as anything else” (Blizek, 1999, p. 108). He clarifies this concept by stating that caring for others requires people to act with appropriate motives and attitudes. By doing something with the wrong attitude, an act that was meant to be caring may turn into something that makes the act uncaring. This factor alone may keep a student from feeling cared for in school. For example, if a student perceives that a teacher is just teaching for the money or to have summers off, any act that is meant to be a caring act towards the student may be perceived as uncaring.

“How good we can be depends at least in part on how others treat us” (Noddings, 2003, p. 34). The manifestation of care will most often occur within the context of interpersonal interactions; how we treat others and how others treat us (Larson & Silverman, 2000). The ways that teachers treat students can contribute to the students’ well-being. Noddings (2005) suggests that “caring is the very bedrock of all successful education and that contemporary schooling can be revitalized in its light” (p. 27).

For teachers to demonstrate an ethic of care in their classrooms, four major components of moral education must be addressed and practiced. According to Noddings, these four components are modeling, dialogue, practice, and confirmation (Noddings, 2005). The first component, modeling, is vital to complete the caring relation. Teachers must show students how to care by creating caring relationships with each individual. A student’s capacity to reciprocate care and be capable of showing care may be dependent on adequate experiences in being cared for (Noddings, 2005). A student must see examples of caring relations and then accept

the care as it is offered. Modeling is in an ongoing action that must be consistent and genuine in order for a student to feel safe enough to participate in caring relations in the classroom.

The second component of establishing care in the classroom is dialogue. The exchange of ideas in a classroom must be open-ended. Students and teachers must be able to communicate openly to find understanding, empathy, and appreciation (Noddings, 2005). Engaging in dialogue with each student permits discussion about not only the content, but also about their relationships. It connects teachers to students and helps to maintain caring relations. Lastly, dialogue is important because it allows teachers and students to gain knowledge of each other that can form a foundation of a caring relationship (Noddings, 2005).

The third component of moral education through the ethic of care is practice. The attitudes of the students are shaped by their experiences. If a teacher practices care in his or her classroom, then students are able to witness care daily. This will enable each student to begin the process of receiving, recognizing, and then responding to the acts of care offered by the teacher. If the practice of caring is present in schools, it should transform the student, the school, and then the society (Noddings, 2005).

Confirmation is the last component that Noddings outlines for the practice of care in schools. “We spot a better self and encourage its development” (Noddings, 2005, p. 25). To confirm a caring act cannot be done by following a formula. A relation of trust must be present and continuity is required. Students must constantly see the full process of a caring act take place and teachers must re-enforce these acts regularly (Noddings, 2005). In summary, teachers have a moral responsibility to

cultivate the caring capacity of their students. “Given the deterioration of values and high rate of crime, future society would benefit from children who grow up to be caring individuals” (Koback, 1997, p. 97).

Noddings states that there is general knowledge that all students must know, but it should be permissible for students to reject some material. She states that with this rejection comes the opportunity to embrace other topics and to pursue these topics with enthusiasm. “Caring teachers will listen and respond differentially to their students” (Noddings, 2005, p. 19).

If a student chooses to pursue some material, a caring teacher will acknowledge and encourage the pursuit. Muller (2001) reiterates by stating that “an indicator of a positive teacher-student relationship is when the teacher perceives that the student is making an effort to learn and succeed in school” (p. 248). Data gathered by Muller in this study also indicates that students try harder when they feel that the teacher cares about their efforts. In addition, students who perceive that their teachers care for them indicate that they enjoy learning (Larson & Silverman, 2000).

Muller (2001) in her study on caring relationships and at-risk students suggests that caring teachers may motivate students who have been labeled at-risk of failing or dropping out (p 18). Today in public schools, many gang members are labeled at-risk because of their behavior issues and low test scores. Although some of the literature suggests that these gang members are unreachable, there is also evidence to support that caring teachers may positively affect these youth.

Knox, in his book *Gangsta in the House*, outlines his 15 years of experience with the Houston Police Department. He claims that “a parent, teacher, police officer, counselor, or any adult authority figure is not likely to influence the average gang

member, because such persons attempt to apply their logic and value system to the life of a gang member” (Knox, 1995, p. 27). According to him, the parents of gang members are likely not to help their children out of the gang. “We must come to grips with the fact that we will not be able to get the families of the gang members to join the struggle” (Knox, 1995, p. 147). However, he also states that the school is an important area to impact these gang involved youth. “At least one teacher...is vital to the safety net” of these students (Knox, 1995, p. 42).

Knox (1995) argues that adults who are successful in working with gang members understand that gangs provide basic needs that are not being met at home. As discussed previously, he supports that a student will join a gang for security or protection, to have a sense of belonging, and to find success in some aspect of his or her life.

Yablonsky (2001) states “Effective adult role models help a youth learn social feelings of love, compassion, and sympathy” (p. 18). There has been some research done that was able to highlight success stories of caring adults affecting the lives and education of youth who were involved in gangs. Dance (2002) and Cassidy and Bates (2005) were able to touch the lives of students and positively influence their education based on caring relationships. The following research will outline two case studies of caring teachers and affected at-risk youth.

The first study was done by Dance (2002) who spent some time with street-savvy students doing ethnographic research in Boston. The students in her study were either gang members or actively involved in the street culture. By immersing herself with students at their school, she was able to write of their lives and opinions of education. This book is known for bringing students’ voices to the debates of

pedagogy, the ethic of care, and educational policy through the perspective of students who come from “the streets.” Dance states her view and mission clearly within the first few pages of the book.

Urban and inner-city students...are asking for help with navigating a world that ‘sees them small,’ a world that looks at them from a distance and sees villains and thugs. They are asking for help in a country that through historic and contemporary discrimination has confined them to urban spaces that are socially isolated. They are asking for viable advice about how to navigate urban and inner-cities communities with inadequate schools and rates of crime, joblessness, and poverty that are disproportionately high. For the students of this study, requests for help often fell upon the deafened or desensitized ears of teachers, other school officials, and the representatives of other mainstream institutions. We pay little or inadequate positive attention to these students throughout their middle and junior high school years and then blame them for donning hard postures. For individuals in positions of influence, the question is clear: Will you positively influence the lives and agency of urban and inner-city students, or will you leave these students to the limiting and constraining social conditions beyond their control? (p. 148)

Through her discussions and interviews with students who were members of gangs or who were enmeshed in the gang culture, Dance learned of teachers who did not engage the students in class work because of their “hard postures.” The students spoke of relationships with their teachers who were “devoid of trust, devoid of caring, and devoid of viable information” (Dance, 2002, p. 75). The students in the study expressed to Dance that the teachers did not seem to care about them. She learned that a few students in her study believed that their teachers understood what they had to deal with on the streets of their neighborhoods, and the most common response from the gang members or street-savvy students was that teachers did not understand their culture. Dance (2002) continues with her observations by concluding that

“Teachers who fail to convey empathetic understanding about the demands of the streets are likely to have a difficult time motivating and eliciting cooperation from street-savvy students” (p. 125). Lastly, Dance (2002) concluded that urban students are “more likely to trust teachers who openly talk about street culture and give viable advice about avoiding illicit activities that take place on urban streets” (p. 83).

However, during her study, Dance also heard stories about teachers who impacted these students in a positive manner. She asked the students questions about their favorite teachers and about teachers who had made an impact on their lives and education. What she learned from these gang members and street-savvy students was that a teacher caring about them was instrumental to success in the classroom (Dance, 2002). According to Dance, street-savvy students are students who may or may not be in a gang, but who identify with the culture. Some of the caring teachers the students described inspired them to “participate actively in their own academic success” (Dance, 2002, p. 84). Some of these caring teachers compelled the street-savvy students to view themselves as academically competent. Care was the major component of these success stories. Dance (2002) concluded that “...my interview data suggests that teachers... who convince students that they genuinely care, cause these students to feel ‘seen’ in a way that they have never felt ‘seen’ before, fully attended to, wrapped up in an empathic gaze” (Dance, 2002, p. 73). The voices of these students indicate that every relationship with a caring teacher is a “scarce but treasured resource” (p. 84).

To delve deeper into Dance’s study, it is important to look at the characteristics of these caring teachers who established positive relationships with the students. As defined by the students in Dance’s study, there are two types of teachers

that they see as “down” (Dance, 2002, p. 145). To these students, down teachers are able to relate to them. The first type of down teacher is a teacher who understands the streets and the “codes of the streets” (Dance, 2002, p. 145). The second type of down teacher is a teacher who may not understand the streets, but cares enough about the students to listen to them and learn about the challenges they face living on the street. The one commonality of these two types of down teachers is that both enable students to talk openly about the pressures of the street culture (Dance, 2002). Dance also calls for schools to hire teachers who can be “down” with the students and set high expectations for them. According to Dance, these types of teachers can help students “successfully navigate the illicit aspects or danger zones of street culture by providing such youths with viable alternatives, viable advice, and if necessary, productive disciplinary responses (Dance, 2002, p. 146).

Dance (2002) also spoke to students about teachers who were their favorites. The qualities that gave teachers the “favorite teacher” status included teachers who understood their students, who had a good sense of humor, who were good role models, and teachers to whom students could talk. The students in her study valued the teachers who took time to get to know their students and who were concerned about them. Her field observations and interviews indicated a positive correlation between feeling understood and being motivated to work with a teacher. Favorite teachers also included teachers who took time for their students and who believed in their abilities (Dance, 2002). However, there was one characteristic that all of the favorite teachers had; all of the students’ favorite teachers had the ability to convince their students that they genuinely cared for them.

Another part of Dance's (2002) study that needs to be noted is the information that she shared about the Paul Robeson Institute for Positive Self-Development. This institute is an example of a program developed specifically to meet the needs of the street-savvy at-risk youth. Dance spent two years studying the institute and interviewing both students and staff. Through the process of mentoring, teachers at the institute work with the students and provide alternative activities. In addition, the mentors "model alternative types of masculine behavior that the boys view as realistic for successfully navigating the negative aspects of street culture" (Dance, 2002, p. 114). The mentors there are quick to challenge the posturing and "hard" behaviors of the students. "Through such attentiveness, teacher-mentors become acquainted with concerns of individual students. Then, the mentors make sure that they send out frequent messages to the students that address emerging concerns, messages to which street-savvy students can relate" (Dance, 2002, p. 120). According to Dance, in many cases these actions de-escalate incidents that may have turned into suspensions or expulsions. The research suggests that the mentors at the institute are not quick to suspend or expel the young men; instead, they redirect and remind the students of their high expectations. The Director of the Institute was quoted saying, "We don't want to do the same thing that teachers do in school. We may spend 15 minutes teaching and more time getting to know your son" (Dance, 2002, p. 118).

Cassidy and Bates (2005) conducted another study at the Whytecliff Education Center, which was established to meet the "multiple needs" of at-risk students. It has a small class size and a low student-teacher ratio. The students who attended the school were labeled at a high risk of dropping out or at a high risk of being pushed out of school because of behavior problems. Some of the students were gang members or

were enmeshed in the street culture that caused them to act out in school. This school had a mission that was designed according to a “collaboratively constructed ethic of care which continues to guide every aspect of its operation” (Cassidy & Bates, 2005, p. 20).

The study by Cassidy and Bates (2005) was meant to show the possible impact of a school that focuses on caring could have for the “most challenging adolescents in the system” (p. 98). Care was investigated from the perspective of teachers, administrators, and students. The study provided an opportunity to examine how care was perceived and enacted, and how the students responded to the care. The students who were interviewed were ages 14-20 and from different ethical backgrounds, geographic locations, and had spent differing lengths of time at the school. Some had a criminal record and some did not. However, prior to coming to the school, each of the students was involved in criminal activity and most were part of destructive peer groups such as gangs. The Cassidy and Bates study “profiles a school that is committed to enacting the ethic of care with a population of underserved ‘at-risk’ adolescents” (Cassidy & Bates, 2005, p. 66).

The results of the study demonstrate a population of teachers who did not overreact to situations, who were there were for students, and who worked to resolve student issues as quickly as possible. Cassidy and Bates (2005) determined that the teachers at this school focused not on academics, but on building relationships with the students. The teachers at Whytecliff developed a flexible and responsive curriculum that allowed each student to find success with academics. In addition, the curriculum allowed students to succeed socially and emotionally.

The researchers found that the staff at Whytecliff had a genuine affection for the teenagers despite their history and backgrounds. Even though the students had been involved in criminal activity and had come to the school with thick files and labels as troublemakers, the teachers and staff treated them with respect and held them in high esteem. The staff at Whytecliff stated that they viewed these students not as delinquents or at-risk youth, but as “survivors with whom they were privileged to spend time” (Cassidy & Bates, 2005, p. 96). This view of the students allowed the teachers to focus on developing student talents and interests and to focus on the positive aspects of their lives; it also created a regard for each student absent of negative judgment. In addition, the school staff allowed students to help with the decision-making about the curriculum. Often this led the curriculum to expand beyond the classroom.

At Whytecliff, the staff also worked with the families of the students and provided all involved with a supportive learning environment (Cassidy & Bates, 2005). This led the staff to have a better understanding of each student and his or her family. Overall, the teachers perceived and enacted caring based on the development of relationships with the students. This ethic of care was recognized by the receivers of the care, the students, and was individually focused based on student needs.

When Cassidy and Bates asked the students to discuss their experience, they said that they liked that at this school they could laugh. The students expressed how enjoyable it was to have “fun infused with learning” (Cassidy & Bates, 2005, p. 91). The students agreed that caring was a part of being a teacher at Whytecliff. They stated that the teachers helped out with their personal problems and were easy to

approach for help. The students placed a high value on the fact that the teachers at Whytecliff both understood them and acknowledged them.

When asked about being respected, the students who were interviewed associated respect with the teachers encouraging them to do their work. They expressed that they were never forced to complete their assignments. The students also confirmed that the teachers showed respect to them without having to earn it and that it was easier to respect the staff because of this. They saw this immediate respect from their teachers as a key to their success at school. The students expressed that prior to their attendance at Whytecliff, respect was something that they were forced to show to teachers and that it was not reciprocated (Cassidy & Bates, 2005).

Most importantly, the students in this study talked extensively about feeling safe at Whytecliff. They expressed that they felt safe physically, emotionally, and psychologically. They stated that they felt safe to talk about their problems at home; they felt safe to ask for help. They could ask questions, take chances, and share their thoughts and feelings. Last, they also felt safe from adults who yelled at them. The students said that they were comfortable at this school. As a result, Cassidy and Bates (2005) state that each student interviewed said that he or she had changed their attitude toward school and that his or her perceptions of adults had also changed. Generally, the students said that they were more tolerant and caring and were less likely to judge others after their schooling experiences at Whytecliff (Cassidy & Bates, 2005).

Cassidy and Bates (2005) claim that, "Finding space for caring is becoming increasingly difficult as administrators, teachers, and students are pushed toward preordained goals set by distant bureaucrats (p. 66). Yet it appears that Whytecliff

has had success by making caring central to the school. It has had a powerful impact on the lives of the high needs students who were interviewed. The students viewed the school as helping them through tough times and as making education fun. At the end of each interview, Cassidy and Bates asked what advice he or she would give to a group of beginning teachers. The students responded by saying that they want teachers to listen, to be good people, to be friends, to take a personal interest in them and treat them with respect, to help them succeed in school, and to show care. At the core of the students' perception of care was the importance of being respectful, responsive, and supportive (Cassidy & Bates, 2005).

The students in this study stated that they, "...felt they had a chance to succeed--and that they were not judged according to their past files or history. Every day was a fresh start" (Cassidy & Bates, 2005, p. 91). When questioned about the fact that these students were able to enter caring relationships so quickly, the students indicated that they had never before felt cared for by a teacher. Cassidy and Bates (2005) argue that this attitude suggests that each student has vulnerability, and that "despite a hardened exterior, that each is reaching out to be cared for and to care" (p. 94).

In Their Own Words

For the reader to gain a full perspective of gang members, it is important to present their view of gang membership, schooling, violence, and relationships in their own words. The purpose of this area of the literature review is to introduce the language and psyche of contemporary gang members. While the academic research is essential to this dissertation, the voices of gang members will provide insight into contemporary gang membership, the ethic of care, and the effects of gang

membership on schools. While this section offers perspective on gang member's views on education, this research will be continued in order to fully answer the questions on how to best educate students in gangs.

On gang membership

Kody Scott, who later renamed himself Sanyika Shakur, was only 11 when he took a shotgun and shot up a rival gang member's house that belonged to the Bloods. He shot several gang members, not feeling any remorse until later that night when he was trying to go to sleep. He later received his gang name, Monster, for his fearless and ruthless killings of the enemy. In his book titled *Monster* (1993), he details his life as Monster and a member of the LA Crips. It is an autobiography, written as Sanyika Shakur, which details his actions as a gang member and the emotions surrounding his actions. Even though it is one man's story, the details give the reader an idea of how contemporary gang members think.

For example, when Kody was initiated into the gang at 11, he was "jumped in" first and then had to shoot some rival gang members. The term "jumped in" means that inducted members of the gang will beat the new gang member repeatedly to test his allegiance and strength. One of the older gang members, Tray Ball, tells the 11 year-old Kody:

"You got potential, 'cause you're eager to learn. Bangin' ain't no part time thang, it's full-time, it's a career. It's bein' down when ain't nobody else down with you. It's getting' caught and not tellin'. Killin' and not caring, and dyin' without fear. It's love for your set and hate for the enemy. You hear what I'm sayin' [sic]" (Shakur, 1993, p. 12).

This statement echoes what the research says about gang loyalty and commitment. Kody discusses how this night stays in his memories because "I have

never, ever felt as secure as I did then in the presence of these cats who were growing fonder of me, it seemed, with each successive level of drunkenness they reached [sic]" (Shakur, 1993, p. 8). He also states that when Tray Ball announced his full membership into the gang, "It was the proudest moment of my life" (Shakur, 1993, p. 12).

Membership in contemporary gangs is a powerful force. Kody stated "My life was consumed by all aspects of gang life. I had turned my bedroom into a virtual command post, launching attacks from my house with escalating frequency. My clothes, walk, talk, and attitude all reflected my love for and allegiance to my set. Nobody was more important than my homeboys — nobody" (Shakur, 1993, p. 69). For many youth, the relationships formed in the gang are the only relationships that they have. In addition, the adrenaline rush that they receive when committing a criminal act is a huge part of the thrill.

Yet even the hardest gangsters understand the dangers of gang membership. As Kody writes, membership in a gang has high risks. He states, after doing some time in jail for a variety of crimes, "The seriousness of my chosen path had made me age with double rapidity. At sixteen I felt twenty-four. Life meant very little to me. I felt that my purpose on earth was to bang. My mind-set was narrowed by the conditions and circumstances prevailing around me. Certainly I had little respect for life when practically all my life I had seen people assaulted, maimed, and blown away at very young ages, and no one seemed to care" (Shakur, 1993, p. 102).

As was young Kody Scott, many of these young boys get introduced to gangs at an early age. One teenager known as "Mann" responded "Young kids get introduced to this as soon as they are old enough to hang out. Their parents place

them up for adoption, given they are not taking proper care of their own kids and the gang will be there to adopt them” (Huff, 2001, p. 91). Mann also states in an earlier discussion that all he had needed was a chance and he could “do whatever” (Huff, 2001, p. 86). It was the gang who came along and gave him a chance to earn money, feel safe, and learn about survival. Mann feels that “A solid reputation for a young kid is essential for his survival, believe it or not” (Huff, 2001, p. 94). He concludes, “We see what we want but we often times can’t reach it. There is always hope, and ironically, that is what gangs...offer—hope is an environment that is so far from America that is it mind-boggling” (p. 89).

When asked why students choose to join a gang, many will explain that the gang is their family. Yet there is more to it than that. “Silencer,” a 17-year-old Blood, offers another reason for being a gang member. He states “Sometimes you can make a little money gangbangin’. But ya’ll better believe it’s a hard way to live. And a fast way to die [sic]” (Bing, 1991, p. xi). Other gang members will explain that they are in a gang merely to survive. Some members feel that they have to be in a gang for the money or the safety. “Mad Dog” says “I don’t want to bang, rob, and steal all the time. Nobody wants to do that shit for a living but if you look around here, what choice do we have [sic]” (Huff, 2001, p. 87). As reflected in Mad Dog’s statement, the last thing that was expressed by some gang members is that they felt they did not have a choice but to be a gang member. “Rider,” another gang member, states “I’ll tell you something that gets me mad, and that’s the notion that youngster ‘join up’ with gangs. Like they was, I don’t know, deciding to join some damn fan club. Hell, half the time they ain’t even got a choice [sic]” (Bing, 1991, p. 224).

In Bing's (1991) book *Do or Die*, a gang member named "Steel" offers another perspective of life on the streets. He states, "There's some people in here, like, they just don't wanna touch reality. They think the 'hood is everything. They think the 'hood is gonna take care of them the rest of they life. They damn near *worship* the 'hood" [sic] (p. 147). In the same book, "Rider" tells of how he tries to help the young gang members by reminding them to let their parents know where they are "even is she's on crack, don't let her worry [sic]" (Bing, 1991, p. 221). It is a sense of taking care of each other amidst of the other illegal and immoral choices the gang makes.

Some of the gang members who were interviewed in the various sources felt that they had no other way to earn money or respect. Even though some of them realize the dangers of their membership, they say that they would join again. "Rider," a gang member interviewed by Bing, says that he would still pledge himself to a gang even though he knows the danger. "Yeah. Yeah, I would. Not because of the way my life turned out, but because of some of my homies. I'm a reflection of them, just like they are of me. I'm proud to be a Blood [sic]" (Bing, 1991, p 218). "B-Dog," another gang member, gets more defensive when asked if he would do it again. He says, "What the fuck I want to change for? I don't feel like I done nothin' wrong in my life. Except not graduating from high school. I regret that [sic]" (Bing, 1991, p. 218).

Based on the interviews, it is apparent that the code of the streets requires these students to "earn respect" and defend this respect by any means necessary. It is expected that the gang members fight when necessary and participate in violent or criminal acts. "Mad Dog" and "Big Frog" state that the conditions of their

neighborhoods produce “mean, hostile, aggressive, and trouble prone young black men [sic]” (Huff, 2001, p. 97). Mad Dog states “This violence shit is a young thing really. When you are young you are trying to prove so much and the gang banging is the right way, given where you are living [sic]” (Huff, 2001, p. 95). Big Frog continues by adding “The way of life around here is simple. Do unto others before they do unto you [sic]” (Huff, 2001, p. 92). Gang member “Mann” adds that “violence is not without reason around here. There is a reason for violence; there are reasons young boys gang bang and kill. A lot of it has to do with respect. You know, wanting and needing to be respected by your peers so much that you will kill for it [sic]” (Huff, 2001, p. 94). The gang members seem to understand that these actions may get them locked up in prison or that they may be killed.

According to these gang members, going to prison is a normal and expected occurrence in their lives. Donnie, who was interviewed in Taylor’s (1990) *Dangerous Society*, states “The joint? Scared, worried about jail? No way...the youth home is really down. If you get sent to the youth home it ain’t no big thing...I ain’t been to the big time, but when I do, it’ll be cool. Going away is just part of being out here [sic]” (p. 51). James, from the same source, says “a lot of dudes like prison because it’s where all their boys is [sic]” (p. 52). Scott, a 14-year-old gang member, states, “Prison is for thugs that make mistakes. My crew don’t make mistakes [sic]” (Taylor, 1990, p. 52).

Prison is not the only consequence that gang members may face. There is also the chance that a gang member will be the recipient of a violent act; these students wake up every day not knowing if this is the day that they will die. “Faro,” a gang member who was interviewed by Bing, says “If you die, you die. Most gang bangers

don't have nothing to live for no more, anyway. That why some of them gangbangin [sic]" (Bing, 1991, p. 44). Later in the same interview he adds "People don't have nothing to live for if they mother dead, they brother dead, they sister dead. What else they got to live for? If people in yo' family is just dyin', if the person you love the most, the person you love the most be dead, then what else do you got to live for [sic]?" (p. 44) Another gang member in Paton's (1998) study says, "Did you know how many of my homies I've seen shot? Six. Do you hear me man? Six. And that's just in the last couple of months. And not all of them were gangbangers. What good will school be doing me when I'm dead? I be wantin' a car and new A-dogs (Adidas sneakers), and a good box (stereo) – stuff like that. Too many brothers getting' wasted out here. I be getting' mine now [sic]" (Paton, 1998, p. 66).

While many gang members continue to participate in the dangerous and deadly activities of their gang, they also often realize the consequences of their actions too late. Kody Scott tells about the death of his friend "Twinky" who was shot in a drive by. In Twinky's last moments, he cried out to his mother who is holding him as he dies and says "Mama, I'm going to be good, I ain't gonna bang no more Mama, I'm gonna be good [sic]" (Shakur, 1993, p. 48). A gang member from *Gangs in America III* says "I soon realized that the streets pavement often was the only cushion for fallen comrades [sic]" (Huff, 2001, p. 84).

On schooling

Dance (2002) spent two years interviewing students about schooling. As discussed earlier in the section on care, many of them who were members of gangs did not feel that teachers understood what it was like living in a culture of the streets. Sam says "No [teachers don't understand the streets] 'cuz if they did, they would talk

about it, and none of my teachers talk about it. I want them to talk about it [sic]" (Dance, 2002, p. 76).

Rodriguez (1993) tells about his experiences as a youth in school in his book *Always Running*. It was frustrating for Rodriguez to not be able to escape the stereotype. He describes how he was always labeled by his teachers and counselors because of where he lived:

"If you came from the Hills, you were labeled from the start. I'd walk into the counselor's office for whatever reason and looks of disdain greeted me – one meant for a criminal, alien, to be feared. Already a thug. It was harder to defy this expectation than just accept it and fall into the trappings. It was a jacket I could try to take off, but they kept putting it back on. The first hint of trouble and the preconceptions proved true. So why not be proud? Why not be an outlaw? Why not make it our own [sic]?" (Rodriguez, 1993, p. 84)

Paton (1998) interviewed several gang members who spoke of similar experiences. One gang member said:

"The teachers are always bitchin' at me because they don't want me in their classes. They think I'm a real bad ass and that I mean trouble whenever I walk through the door. They never gave me a fuckin' chance, so I be showing them just what a big, bad nigger is. If they don't wanna teach me, so what? I'll teach them some things I bet they ain't never seen before [sic]" (Paton, 1998, p. 67).

Other gang members in this interview felt like school was a waste of time. One said "Why do I want to waste my time goin' to school for? I already know everything I need in the hood, and I won't be learning any of that from some teacher [sic]" (Paton, 1998, p. 66).

Even though many of the gang members expressed negative opinions of school and shared the stories of school that led to these opinions, there were some

interviews that highlighted the positive experiences of gang members. Dance (2002) interviewed a student named Malcolm who belonged to a gang. He indicated that his grades were the best when he felt that his teachers believed in him. He says “Fourth grade was the year that all my teachers was telling me I’m like the smartest kid in the classroom [sic]” (Dance, 2002, p. 101). Malcolm also tells of a teacher, Ms. Bronzic, who motivated and inspired him. He says about Ms. Bronzic, “She was so cool. She was the coolest teacher I ever knew: the coolest white lady teacher I ever knew. [Ms. Bronzic] use to always tell me I could do better. And I remember her teaching me that way; to always be better than the best [sic]” (Dance, 2002, p. 71).

Cassidy and Bates (2005) also spoke to many at-risk and troubled youth who had good experiences at Whytecliff. Students said that at other schools they were labeled as the troublemakers, but at Whytecliff the teachers really “knew how to deal with kids like us [sic]” (Cassidy & Bates, 2005, p. 88). One student said, “At regular schools, you slip up a just a little bit, you know what I mean, and you get in so much trouble, so much trouble. You’ve got to see the principal, and you’ve got to have a meeting with your parents, and this and that and the other thing, before you can even go back to class [sic]” (p. 88). But at Whytecliff, the teachers are perceived by the students as working together to help them and understand them. One student spoke highly of the staff there, stating, “Other principals just judge me and my life...the principal here, he understands. He knows what’s going on...and the teachers here, they’re just funny, and they understand you more than anyone else does, and they actually talk to you about what’s going on, while other teachers are like, “whatever, just do your work [sic] ” (Cassidy & Bates, 2005, p. 88).

The students at Whytecliff feel that their teachers care for them and see the care that is offered by their teachers in a practical way. One student commented, “You always have help when you need it [sic]” (Cassidy & Bates, 2005, p. 89). Another student explained that he saw teachers as “more personal, straight up, and interactive...they care about my health. They care about my well-being, you know. They are in it for us [sic]” (Cassidy & Bates, 2005, p. 90).

One student from Whytecliff echoed the negative sentiment expressed from some of the other gang members who were interviewed in other studies. He stated, “Like I have a violent history, right? If I fought in public school, you know, I was gone that year, not even a second thinking about it. ‘Bye, see you later,’ just because of my history. Where at this place they don’t judge you by your history, they judge you on how you act, how you react to things, and how much you take responsibility for it [sic]” (Cassidy & Bates, 2005, p. 92).

A few of the students in this interview described the care they received at Whytecliff and how it changed their lives. A student interviewed by Cassidy and Bates (2005) had a troubled past and had once been a drug dealer. Whytecliff and the caring staff had changed him. He stated, “Now when I meet somebody...I don’t just look at them and label them. I actually talk to them and you know, label them from the inside [sic]” (Cassidy & Bates, 2005, p. 93). Another student said, “When I first started this school I would slack off a lot, and after a while I had a meeting...they were telling me about how they care about me, how they want me here, and me here makes the school a better place, kind of thing. And that’s when I felt that I really cared, and ever since then I would come to school as much as I can. I only missed it

once in a while, like if I was sick in the morning. But besides that I'm always here. Like, I love this place [sic]" (Cassidy & Bates, 2005, p. 93).

Through the words and stories of these gang members, street-savvy, and at-risk students, researchers can better understand the values and needs of gang members. Perhaps these stories can help to better understand the perspectives of these youth, their opinions of schools, and give educators insights regarding how to reach out to them while they are in school.

The issue of gangs in schools is not going away. Ex-gang member Rodriguez (1993) states "my youth, although devastating, was only the beginning stages of what I believe is now a consistent and growing genocidal level of destruction predicated on the premise there are marginalized youth with no jobs or future, and are therefore expendable [sic]" (Rodriguez, 1993, p. 7). Ex-gang member Kody Scott (1993) states, "Gangsterism continues. But more importantly, the struggle to eradicate the causes of gangsterism continues. And it is this struggle to which I am dedicated [sic]" (Shakur, 1993, p. 377). In the early nineties, Scott (Shakur) was interviewed by Bing in her novel *Do or Die* (1991). He sent a message to young gang bangers that still is appropriate today. He states "Be your own selves. Don't bend or break under peer pressure. It is individuals who make up a gang, and it is you as individuals, who will get captured, get shot, do the time, get killed. It's you as individuals who have to make the decision to educate yourselves. Or not. It's you who keep yourselves down if you choose not to get educated [sic]" (Bing, 1991, p. 262). Gang member Monster Kody Scott states that education is the key.

Implications for the Classroom

In their article on The Whytecliff Education Center, Cassidy and Bates (2005) detail a school that found success with at-risk students. They described a color coordinated school where the principal awaited at the door each morning to chat with students. One of the researchers even commented, “I feel a tremendous sense of calm and peace [at the school]...It’s as if the place has something healing about it and there is a calmness, no one is hurried, everyone is calm, no one raises their voices” (Cassidy & Bates, 2005, p. 76). A calm and healing environment seems to be a way to deescalate the pressures of gang activity within a school environment.

The research article continues to describe a school where the staff work to engage students in their own education in the hopes that their lives will change (Cassidy & Bates, 2005). The faculty at Whytecliff took a strength-based approach to their students and intentionally focused on the individual strengths of each student. They worked to adapt the program to fit each student, not to help the students adapt to the program. The staff intentionally tried to find links from the students to their communities and to their families. They actively encouraged parents and guardians to be a part of their child’s education at Whytecliff (Cassidy & Bates, 2005).

The staff at Whytecliff worked to build relationships with each student. Modeling care was an important component that directly linked to the mission of the school. In fact, the administrators at the school modeled caring to their own staff in a way that they want the staff to care for the students (Cassidy & Bates, 2005). They strived to create an environment of a family, not a place of work. The implication is that demonstrating care in schools is a way to build relationships with gang members.

To the staff at Whytecliff, every student was capable of learning and succeeding, despite his or her explosive tempers or non-communicative behaviors. It was with this approach that students began to build confidence in themselves and their school, and then began to learn (Cassidy & Bates, 2005).

A teacher believing in the abilities of a student can change his life. In the book *We Beat the Street* by Davis, Jenkins, and Hunt (2005), the men talk about teachers who affected their education. All three of the authors were at-risk of failing out of school and were faced with the choice to join or not join their neighborhood gang. Most notably, Jenkins (2005) shared about his grade school teacher, Miss Johnson. He stated, "It's amazing how much of a positive effect one teacher can have on the life of a student. Miss Johnson was the most influential person in my life..." (Davis, Jenkins, & Hunt, 2005, p. 27). The implication is that it is possible for one teacher to affect a student in a positive manner. Jenkins was able to avoid his neighborhood gang and the pressures of life on the street. He graduated from High School and then went to medical school and became a doctor.

Delaney (2006) states that most gang members are likely to drop out of school by the tenth grade. He adds, "The key, then, is to find some way to keep these youths interested in school" (Delaney, 2006, p. 224). Perhaps the best way is to keep students interested is to create a safe school environment and to build lasting relationships with these students based on genuine care and concern.

The literature outlined directed me to hear the stories of the gang members, study their words, and find out more about their perspective on their school experiences. By listening to their stories, I have gained insight on the affect of

individual teachers on students in gangs. It was my desire to better understand how teachers and administrators can better serve this population of students in schools.

This study has offered support of two previous studies, conducted by Dance (2002) and Cassidy and Bates (2005). In addition, it has offered insight into practical application to better educate gang members in contemporary schools.

Chapter 3: To Give Them A Voice

Introduction

There is some research available on contemporary gangs, especially research dealing with the question of “why” students join gangs. However, little research has been done within the framework of gangs in schools. Many studies on gangs focus on violence and the effects of violence or present statistical data about the growth of gangs in the United States. In these studies, the education of gang members is on the peripheral (Brotherton, 2003). Brotherton (2003) states that “...relatively little attention has been paid to gangs and gang members regarding the complex and fluctuating attitudes they possess toward education in its various forms” (Brotherton, 2003, p. 137). He adds, “Virtually no gang studies go beyond a narrow definition of schooling” (Brotherton, 2003, p. 138). To better understand the attitudes and perspectives of students, it is important to speak with them and give them an opportunity to share their stories and thoughts on schooling. It is for this reason that I chose to do a qualitative study.

Qualitative Research

The purpose of this study was to gain insight into the perspectives of gang members who attend school. By choosing a qualitative method, it is my hope to better understand how adults can work with gang members within a school. Knox (1994) defends the use of qualitative research to study gangs and lists two important reasons to use oral history and case study methods; first, qualitative research complements traditional methods. Second, he states that qualitative research “makes for spicy reading in as much as it goes behind and beyond the mere numerical codification of human experiences and in this sense provides a more humanistic

orientation to the study of deviants, delinquents, offenders, and gang members” (Knox, 1994, p. 140-141).

As the goal of qualitative research is to study objectively the state of the subjects (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003), I was mindful of bias and judgment. It is also important to note that subjectivity is considered a part of qualitative research. It was my intention to add to the knowledge base of gangs in schools by obtaining meaningful thoughts and ideas from the gang members.

I used a multiple case study approach in this study. This method was chosen to involve the students directly in the research and to gain insight into the boys’ perceptions of their schooling experiences. For a multiple-case study approach, it was vital to use open-ended response questions in order for the interview candidates to “make sense” of their schooling experiences (McMillan & Schumacher, 1993, p. 423). I designed such open-ended questions with the assistance of both the Cassidy and Bates (2005) study and the dissertation committees’ suggestions.

A qualitative design studies a problem by “entering the field of perception of participants: seeing how they experience, live, and display the phenomenon” (Creswell, 1998, p. 31). It is naturalistic and descriptive in nature and seeks to provide meaning, (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003) in this case, of gangs in schools. It looks for “lived experiences” (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003, p. 51). I was able to find meaning within the participants’ experiences. This approach offered explanations for violent or disruptive behavior from gang members in schools. It also offered some insight into how to better educate and relate to students who are gang members.

The Importance of Narrative Research

The study is a qualitative approach to the dynamics of gangs in schools. Whereas this study does not examine a school system with long-term observations of gang members in schools, it will use narrative research to observe the “essence” of gang members’ experiences within a school setting. Narrative research will “undertake the careful, in-depth examination” of these students and their school lives (Jalongo & Isenburg, 1995).

By using narrative as a way to understand gang members, I had hoped to better understand their point of view. In addition, this narrative and the analysis of the stories and opinions made the research more accessible and easier to understand from a scholarly perspective. It is important to note that gang members have a language, code of conduct, and rules that are often different from other groups. It is for this reason that interviews helped explain the nature of these groups within the context of schooling; it was my intent to have the students talk of their schooling experiences in a manner that teachers and researchers could understand their perceptions. To help clarify the need for accessible research of this nature, Knox (1994) stated, “If a correctional officer, or a law enforcement officer, or a probation/parole officer, or a school teacher --- someone who must deal with gangs and gang members in everyday life --- had to read some of our prior books about gangs and try to relate these concepts to their work, they would probably experience more than a little confusion or dismay being able to do so” (Knox, 1994, p. 210).

As Jalongo and Isenburg (1995) state, “Numbers can also be used to distance ourselves. It is easy to love all children in theory, yet despise one, some, or most students in practice” (Jalongo & Isenburg, 1995, p. xxii). By hearing their voices

instead of seeing the statistical analysis, it is easier to understand their point of view. Student “narrative puts a face back on the statistic” (Jalongo & Isenburg, 1995, p. xxii).

Narrative forms of research are extensive in this qualitative design. The narrative will include answers to direct questions and storytelling. Although some qualitative researchers believe that storytelling “blurs” the lines between journalism and scholarly studies (Creswell, 1998), it is important to note that this type of narrative will provide the essence of the gang members’ perspectives. Whether fact or fiction, the stories from the student being interviewed allowed me to understand the student’s point of view. Some techniques that I used to gain rich narrative data included chronological event sharing, narrowing or expanding the focus of the questions, gaining descriptions of events, and asking questions pertaining to student perspective (Creswell, 1998).

The informants in this research will offer their stories and perspectives framed from the point of view of a gang member; as a result, it was important to examine the structure of the narrative and decide how each account starts and concludes. This gave me more information about the student. Additionally, I was able to determine what the student was saying outside of the slang and storytelling. To also examine the narrative in terms of the organization helped to outline the student’s belief system. Last, I examined where there are contradictions in the interviews and asked questions to help clarify the narrative (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003). Essentially the narrative told the stories of each student’s schooling experience.

Using Multiple-Case Study Methods

By following Lincoln and Guba's (1985) case study structure, I identified the problem, highlighted the context of the problem and the issues in the literature review, and used the data analysis to introduce the lessons learned from the interviews with the students. In this research, the case studies were compared and contrasted to gain more insight into the growing issues surrounding gangs in schools.

According to Tellis (1997), a frequent criticism of the case study method is that it is difficult to generalize the results based on one case. For this reason, my intention was to complete a multi-site, multiple case study method using 15 different candidates from different locations of a residential treatment facility. According to Creswell (1998), a multiple-case study is an "exploration of a 'bounded system' or a case over time through detailed, in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of information rich in context" (p. 61). The case is bounded by place and time and includes review of the events, activities, and ideas of the individuals being studied. For this research, the bounded system is represented by the one-year interview process. It is important to note that this period includes the search for candidates as well as the interviews.

Bogdan and Biklen (2003) add to the knowledge of multiple-case studies by stating, "When researchers study two or more subjects, settings, or depositories of data they are usually doing what we call multi-case studies" (p. 62). For study, I was only able to gain access to four different gang involved youth. While it was my intention to interview 15, only four of 16 potential candidates agreed to the study. Sources of information for this study include the interviews with the student, field observations, and a file review of each candidate. I used all these sources to provide

an accurate description of each case and the potential lessons that are learned from this study.

These case studies were descriptive in nature and used rich details of each conversation to provide a framework of the students' perceptions of care in schools. It was also interpretive in nature as the descriptive data was used to develop categories of explanation and to illustrate any connections between the literature and the reality of the interviews.

Research Questions

By using a multiple-case study method, it was my goal to answer the following questions:

1. How do students who are gang members perceive schooling?
2. How do students who are gang members perceive their teachers?
3. If a student in a gang experiences caring in school, what does this care look like?

Population and Sampling

To study the perceptions of gang members in schools, a purposeful, criterion sampling strategy was used. Because the sample of students must be gang members, past or present, it was vital to speak to students who have experienced schooling as a gang member.

It is difficult to gain access to gang members who are currently attending schools. It is also potentially dangerous for me to become involved with gang members in an open environment outside of being their teacher in the classroom; for example, it would have been dangerous to seek out gang members at my current school or other schools in my area. For these reasons, I decided to seek out students

through other resources. I was able to gain access to a private residential treatment facility that has enrolled students who have been identified as gang members. The governing board with the program approved interviews with students at several of their facilities with the hopes that the research would also be helpful in their work with the boys in their educational settings.

This research addresses a problem that requires the use of purposeful sampling to gain answers. According to Bogdan and Biklen (2003), purposeful sampling is used when populations of subjects are believed to be able to facilitate insight into a particular problem. Maxwell (2005) claims that there are four possible goals that justify the use of purposeful sampling. Of these goals, two of four fit this study. The first goal of purposeful sampling is to represent a particular group of individuals. Purposeful sampling is appropriate as I cannot gain insight into the perception of gang members if the candidates are not involved in gangs. Another goal is to examine cases that are critical to the theories that develop from the review of literature. From the literature, I learned that there is a connection between care and success in students; in order to study the connection between the successes of gang members, it is critical to examine students who are in gangs. As stated previously, the residential treatment facility agreed to be the resource for the purposeful selection strategy.

I recognize that my previous involvement with the residential facility as a teacher may affect the results. Although this previous involvement allowed access to the site and to the students, it was important to note my preconceived ideas and to document the entire interview by recording and transcription. Each interview candidate had the opportunity to read the transcripts and review the notes for accuracy before themes were developed and results written.

Site Description

The administrative offices and residential treatment facility is on a large, 300 acre land plot. The facility provides a cottage, vocational facility, school, and cafeteria to boys from all over the United States who need specialized services because of poor behaviors and criminal activities. The program services also include group homes in local areas. There are also two day school programs. Overall, the program provides homes and schools to hundreds of students in need of services.

I had access to candidates in all the programs. The students at the residential facilities have been placed there by county agencies in their hometown with the hope of rehabilitating the behaviors of the boys and girls. The program is known for providing healthy environments for their students to make positive changes in their lives through specialized education, vocational opportunities, and behavioral therapy.

The main focus for the study was on the boys who resided on the campus of the residential treatment facility. Most of these students had been in serious trouble; they have had problems with the law, and have been suspended or expelled from the schools in their hometown. This program is often a “last chance” facility that gives the students an opportunity to prove themselves as citizens who can obey the law and attend school without being disruptive or dangerous. Occasionally there may be a student placed who simply has nowhere else to go; most of these boys are placed with the understanding that they must improve their choices and behaviors or serve time for their crimes in juvenile or adult prison facilities. It is important to note that not all students who attend the program are gang members.

The board approved interviews with students at several of their facilities with the hopes that the research would also be helpful in their work with the boys in their

educational settings. The staff agreed to help me identify candidates who have been in a gang or who are currently in a gang according to the Virginia State definition of gangs. From this sample, these students were asked to participate in the study.

Permission from their legal guardians and permission from the students were obtained before interviews began.

A Model for Research

I began interviews with students who were identified as gang members by the staff of the residential treatment facility. As Cassidy and Bates (2005) did in their study, I asked students questions about their schools. These questions included asking them to provide a description of their schools, what they liked and disliked about their schooling experiences, and how they would describe caring and uncaring in their schools. They were asked if they have felt cared for, who cared for them, and how care was demonstrated to them. Last, students were asked to describe any schooling experience that impacted them, how they would improve their schooling experiences and their teacher relationships, and if they have any advice for first year teachers.

As in the Cassidy and Bates study (2005), I also examined how the students describe their relationships in their schooling experiences. The environment was described and I also gathered information on the students' past schooling environments. The schooling relationships that were successful in the eyes of the students were analyzed as well as the relationships that were unsuccessful. The question of how students' perceived care and caring relationships in their schooling experiences were examined.

Categorically, I analyzed the information of caring perceptions based on the same concepts used in the Cassidy and Bates (2005) study. These categories included

the students' perceptions of feeling welcomed, being acknowledged and understood, feeling respected, receiving needed help, and the idea that their teachers and administrators are their friends. Of course, as new categories emerged from the data, these categories were included.

Procedures

I first presented the research and findings from the literature review to the leadership staff at the residential treatment facility. The leadership staff agreed to help me by allowing access to students from all of the programs governed by the residential treatment program. This access was also approved by the Virginia Commonwealth University's Institutional Review Board. The leadership staff requested that part of the interview process ask questions directly about the schooling experiences at their facility with the hope of gaining information to help improve the instruction on the campuses.

Students were identified as potential interview candidates and permissions were gained so that I could begin the research. The students signed an assent form and his parent or legal guardian signed permission in order for them to participate in the study.

I developed a list of potential open-ended questions to ask students (see Appendix 1). This instrument included ideas and questions generated from the Cassidy and Bates (2005) study that was outlined in Chapter 2. I asked the participants questions pertaining to his gang experiences, his experiences as a gang member in school, questions on his teachers, and questions on his perceptions of care within his schooling experience.

Before the interview process began, a draft of the questions was presented to the staff at the treatment facility. I then obtained feedback from the staff on the questions and edited them as needed to gain the richest, most descriptive data possible. The questions were then presented to the dissertation committee, who also offered feedback and helped me complete the revisions.

After the first interview was completed, I piloted the study with one student. After careful and intentional analysis of the first interviews, the questions were again revised. From there, the interviews were conducted with four students from the facilities that met the criteria for gang membership and involvement. The transcriptions were then completed and used for data analysis. The results of these interviews are outlined in Chapter Four and the analysis is in Chapter Five.

Criteria for Gang Membership and Involvement

Students were identified by members of the staff from each site. I met with teachers and staff from each site to present the study. First, I provided an overview of the study and the research questions. Second, I presented the assent and consent forms to the staff and answered questions about the process for obtaining permissions. Third, I spent some time covering Human Subjects Research protocol with the staff to ensure that confidentiality and privacy were maintained during the course of the study.

After these sessions at each site, each group of staff identified students who were potential candidates as a team. They reviewed the Virginia Code and the appropriate definition of a gang member to determine which student was legitimately involved in gangs. Although some students may self report gang involvement, the staff would discuss the claim to determine if this is legitimate. The staff identified

behaviors that indicated gang membership such as doodles to represent their gang or set, gang tattoos, students who flashed signs or wore colors, and students who had been disciplined in their home schools for gang involvement.

Each site designated one or two members of the staff to approach the student who had been identified as a potential candidate; the same staff members would handle all discussions with the students at each site. The rationale behind this was to minimize the number of people who knew which students were participating in the study.

If a student agreed to the interview, the staff member would contact his parent or guardian and have the permission forms signed. After the permission forms were obtained, the staff contacted me to schedule the interviews.

Data Collection

I incorporated the five aspects of naturalistic inquiry outlined by Lincoln and Guba (1985). These five aspects are: (1) Deciding on the focus, mode of participant selection, and the goals of the interviews; (2) Collection of data through interviews; (3) Recording and transcribing data; (4) Data analysis; and (5) Determining trustworthiness of the data.

The first aspect of this study was illustrated and outlined by the previous chapters. The second aspect involved data collection through interviews, a file review, and researcher observations. First, a pilot study was completed. When the pilot study and revisions were finalized, I spent time interviewing students at the only facility that produced candidates. No other sites were able to recruit students to participate in the study. To gain the richest descriptions, the interviews were as long as 45 minutes. Interviews were audio recorded with the participants' knowledge.

After the first round of interviews, I completed and read the transcriptions and compiled a second round of interview questions to help clarify the ideas and thoughts from the first interview. These questions clarified the first interviews and allowed the students to give feedback on the developing themes (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003). A third round of interviews on two of the candidates was completed through the same process.

Data Analysis

After the interviews were completed, the data was transcribed verbatim and read thoroughly. Data was analyzed through coding, the sketching of ideas, taking notes, and writing summaries of field notes. I clarified bias and opinions and made notes of perceptions to offer a higher quality of data analysis.

Shkedi (2005) stated that “The process of data analysis in the Multiple Case Narrative is systematic and deliberate in all of its procedures and has a set form of stages” (p. 79). For this study, the data was broken down into ideas and themes and reorganized into explanations of the perceptions of the student gang members. Shkedi describes these ideas and themes as “bits” or “units of meaning” (p. 79).

The process that Shkedi (2005) describes in the text *Multiple Case Narrative* is the process that was used to analyze the data. The first step of analysis occurred during the interview process. “Analysis occurs simultaneously with, as well as subsequent to, data collection” (Shkedi, 2005, p. 82). After the initial analysis that took place during the interviews and transcriptions, an initial review was completed. This review was simply rereading the data and notes to become more familiar with the overall picture of the data. “This reading is not passive; it is a comprehensive analytical reading” (Shkedi, 2005, p. 82).

The second step in the data analysis process was the coding of the data. This process required me to categorize the data by themes and ideas. “Categorization is based on classification; it is done by breaking down the data in order to make meaning out of it” (Shkedi, 2005, p. 83). The fieldnotes and file review data were also analyzed and broken down into themes and ideas. Richards (2005) states that the goal of qualitative coding is to “learn from the data” (p. 86). As suggested by Richards (2005), all of the data was revisited and revised until a clear picture of the students’ perceptions of care in school could be deduced and supported. Last, the categories were named using the language of the gang members as much as possible (Shkedi, 2005). This process of data analysis is similar to the suggested analysis of McMillan and Schumacher (1993).

I then looked for themes of care to emerge from the interviews and analyzed the opinions of the students on the care that was received. I also looked for indicators of success within the school experience, such as good grades or school involvement. Last, I examined the relationships described by the students and looked for indicators of care and non-care. Students’ experiences with schooling were analyzed, as were student-teacher interactions. Any other information or themes about gangs in schools that developed was also considered in the data analysis process.

In addition, I analyzed data by creating folders and providing descriptions of the “meanings of the experiences” (Creswell, 1998, p. 148). These meanings were then grouped into subheadings to find more common themes and give an idea of the interpretation of the data. Each story included in the analysis included a structural description of gang members’ perspective of schooling and teachers.

Careful analysis of the stories, opinions, and thoughts of these students provided inquiry and reflection into gang members' views of schools and teachers. The theory of care as discussed in Chapter Two provided the "theoretical lens" through which the data was analyzed. From this data, I formed conclusions and suggestions to help teachers better work with gang members in their schools.

Data management

Several forms of data were collected and maintained during this study. In addition to the interviews and transcriptions, I had the opportunity to do a file review of each candidate. Through IRB approval and permissions granted from both the participants and their legal guardians, I was granted access to their education files to collect aggregate data that may help with the findings. Fieldnotes from the file review are included in the data and analysis. Also included in the field notes were my observations and thoughts during the interviews and during visits to the school on the campus of the treatment facility.

Standards of Quality/Trustworthiness

For qualitative research, reliability is centered on a study that is both comprehensive and accurate (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003). It necessary to find a correlation between the study and what actually occurs in life. To add to this, Knox (1994) states that with reliability, the research must be able to "get the same story again and again" (p. 147). Although there could be some variation in results if two researchers completed the same the interview on the same candidate, the story should present the same case and basis for comparison.

To ensure credibility, there was member checking of the data to ensure that the research reflects the students' voice and not my voice or perceptions. With the

exception of one interview, all interviews were read over and signed by each student. I lost access to one student before he could verify his second interview. The students also requested copies of their own interviews to keep.

Anticipated Themes

Throughout the literature, it is noted that a school environment and teachers who demonstrate an ethic of care have had more success with students who are at-risk for educational failure or for dropping out of school. As students who are members of gangs or who identify with the gang culture can be in both of these at-risk categories, it was anticipated that the interviewed students told stories of success in schools that highlighted an ethic of care. It was also expected that students, when asked to describe their favorite teachers or teachers who had an impact on their education, would tell stories of teachers who demonstrate an ethic of care. These themes were present and are highlighted in Chapter Four and analyzed in Chapter Five.

From my own experience, I have had more success in the classroom when the ethic of care was in practice. Students are more responsive to me when I have developed a relationship with them. In my three years of work with at-risk boys and the six years of experience in a high school setting, I anticipated that the data would lead me to direct teachers to show care for gang members in their classroom. It was my expectation that the students in the study would be able to paint a picture of what care looks like to them and how care is perceived in the classroom. It was my hope to be able to translate what this care looks like into practical applications for classroom teachers, counselors, and administrators.

Delimitations

It is important to delimit this research, as it is representative of gang members who are currently in treatment for their behavioral issues and poor choices. This factor may have affected the results of the perception of these gang members. Their views may be different from those who are currently and actively involved in gang activities based on the treatment they have already received for their behavioral issues.

Second, this research only represents four students at a residential treatment facility in 2009. It was inappropriate to generalize the findings, although there are many ideas that are derived from the data that may prove transferrable after further study.

The third delimitation is that only gang members were used in this study despite the implications that “wannabe” gang members are just as influential in schools. However, in order to gain a clear understanding of a true gang member’s perception, it was important to use only confirmed gang members for this initial study.

It is also important to note that if a student self identifies to be a gang member there is the possibility that he is not a member of a gang. The staff identified the candidates based on their observations and experiences with the student, but I could not be absolutely certain that he is a member of a gang.

Limitations

The purposeful sampling of this study only reflected the perceptions of the students who participated in the interview process. The sample number is also small, with only four interview candidates. In addition, all of the participants are from the

same location and were undergoing residential treatment. The nature of the facility where the students were housed may have affected the results of the interviews.

This study is also limited in that I was only able to meet with the students a few times and did not actually observe any encounters with teachers or other students in a school setting. Therefore, the data in this study relies solely on the participants' recollection of events.

Last, I am aware that the participation in this study is skewed. It should be noted that the participants may have different characteristics than non-participants. As no control group exists in this study, it is unclear whether and to what extent gang members differ from participants who are not gang members. I also did not examine how these participants at the treatment facility may be different from gang members who are not in treatment or gang members who are incarcerated.

VCU IRB

In addition to receiving approval for the research from the board at the treatment facility, the research was approved by the Virginia Commonwealth University Institutional Review Board. This study initially required a full review as the population being researched is classified as a "vulnerable population."

Some populations are considered vulnerable if there are concerns about their competency to understand information presented to them and make reasoned choices. These populations include the students who are minors. They are considered a vulnerable population because they develop decision-making skills and related competencies over time. The population is also considered vulnerable because they are institutionalized and may be not be free to make choices without coercion or

influence. It is for these reasons that working with the leadership staff to choose students is vital.

The staff suggested that the students who participate in the study be rewarded for their time and involvement in the study. They suggested offering special snacks as a reward and incentive to participate. The VCU IRB approved this offering. Every time I went to interview, I took the students a snack to thank them for their participation.

Chapters Four and Five presented and analyzed the data gathered at the interviews, through the file review, and through my observations during the time I spent with each student. It is my hope that the views offered in this study will allow teachers to gain a better understanding of the gang members who fill the seats in their classrooms.

Chapter 4: The Sound of His Voice

Findings

This dissertation examines gang members' perceptions of their schooling experiences, teachers, and, more specifically, their perceptions of care. This chapter presents their views through a file review, researcher observations, and their own words, as well as demographic information of the four participants in addition to profiles of each young man. The interview questions are listed in Appendix I for reference.

All four of the young men interviewed were in residential treatment in rural Virginia. Unfortunately, no participants at the four other residential treatment sites agreed to participate. The recruiting for participants began in April 2009; each site began to recruit following a training and information session at several locations. The training was not offered to all of the locations as the Director of Education, who attended two of the three sessions, recruited at those sites.

Prior to August, one other candidate agreed to participate in the study and rescinded his consent after I traveled to the campus twice to meet with him. A scheduling error occurred the first time I went to interview him and he was not on campus. The second time I traveled to meet with him, he had decided to spend the day with his friends instead. Finally, he politely refused my interview and asked to be removed from the candidate list.

In addition, according to the staff at the residential treatment facility, there were at least 12 other students who were approached to participate in the study but refused. During the time period of this study, the residential treatment facility was

serving approximately 30 students at the residential location, 50 at the day school programs, and 15 in the group homes. While these numbers changed during the course of the study, approximately 16 students met the requirements of being a gang as defined by the Virginia State Code. A discussion of this refusal is present in Chapter Five. As a result, only four students agreed to participate and were consequently interviewed between August 2009 and December 2009.

Demographic Information

Demographic information for the four participants in this study was obtained from a file review; each of the four participants agreed to allow access to their files. In addition, all four participants' parent or legal guardian signed a consent form. The number of participants in this sample represents about 3% of the current population of the facility residents and less than 1% of the potential participants who met the criteria for participation. The average age of the participants was 16.5 years. Two of the four participants are seeking to earn a GED while two plan to return to school to earn a high school diploma. Two of the four students are considered to be eligible for special education services. However, because of limitations on the file review as determined by the Institutional Review Board, the specific type of special education needs are not addressed in this study. Pseudonyms, which were chosen by each candidate, are used to ensure confidentiality.

For the purposes of this study, a file review was completed. I read through each of their education files, noting information about birth date, socio-economic status, and the students' number of siblings. If the file noted any information about gang involvement, I also took brief notes. This information is used only for the purpose of supporting knowledge of gang membership.

Table 1*Participants' Demographic Information*

Name	Age	Gender	Ethnicity	Diploma/GED?	Special Ed?
Uncle Bob	17	Male	Bi-racial	GED	No
JB	17	Male	Caucasian	Diploma	Yes
Long Hair	16	Male	Hispanic	Diploma	No
Anonymous	16	Male	Hispanic	GED	Yes

The Informants

This section includes interview summaries of all four participants and profiles that have been developed using both the file review and interviews. Fieldnotes and observations were also used when supported by the information obtained in the interview.

The small conference room where we met contained only a two-person couch, two chairs, a coffee table, and another table against the wall that was stacked with papers. The walls were painted in neutral tones and covered with pin holes and smudges from the brown and green furniture being moved and knocked around. In one corner there was a filing cabinet and a bulletin board with different facility guidelines and a few pictures. A dusty phone sat on top of the filing cabinet and was constantly blinking red.

When I first entered the space, I moved the chairs closer to the coffee table for better recording. Although the conference room was private, the thin walls allowed us to constantly hear the secretaries interacting with the team leaders in the next room.

I later heard the sound of each student shifting in his creaky, wooden chair on the recordings.

Case Study 1: Uncle Bob

Uncle Bob is a 17-year-old bi-racial male from a college town in Virginia where he lived with his mother and stepfather before placement at the residential treatment facility. Uncle Bob has two older brothers, two younger brothers and, according to his file, seven step and half siblings.

Dressed in khaki pants and a maroon polo shirt embroidered with the school emblem, he entered the small conference room and shook my hand before he sat down. At first, he was confused by the way I had arranged the space to allow for a better recording; he glanced around and then attempted to sit far from me on the two person couch on the other side of the room. When I asked him to sit closer to me, he was hesitant but did as I had asked. He is about 6'5" tall and slender and appeared healthy with no visible tattoos or scars. During the interview, he seemed timid as he spoke so softly that I could barely hear him. He kept his hands neatly folded in his lap during most of the interview.

For the first interview, I offered Uncle Bob a Gatorade and a Snickers candy bar. He accepted them both but did not open the beverage or eat his candy. Instead, he left them on the table until the interview was complete and then packed them in his book bag. His team leader, who also was the recruiter for the study, told me that Gatorade was his favorite drink and then requested that I only purchase and offer him the orange flavored one. He told me about a situation at a convenience store a few weeks prior when Uncle Bob had refused to buy any Gatorade because the only on the

shelf was the color of his rival gang. I wanted to ask Uncle Bob about the incident but could not find an appropriate moment in the interview to inquire.

Sports are something that Uncle Bob cares about and enjoys; he loves the Lakers basketball team. As a basketball player, he considers that to be his area of talent. When he lived out West, he played in a little league team as a center. He also played for an AAU team in his home town. Other than basketball, he expressed that there is nothing else he is good at doing. When I asked him what his other talents were, he stated, “I can’t think of anything. For real, for real.”

Uncle Bob was a tenth grader at his high school in Virginia when he was first placed in residential treatment for issues at school. He expressed frustration at being “really far behind in school,” so he just stopped going. He said that the teachers wanted him to “catch up” with his studies, but he “didn’t want to do it.” Truancy charges initiated both of his placements in treatment. Uncle Bob expressed that he skipped school because he really didn’t like school at all. In his first interview, he stated that all he ever wanted to do was to find a job and be out on his own but that he was “too young for that right now.” He explained to me that earning his GED seemed to be the quickest way to finish school so that he could find a job.

This was not Uncle Bob’s first time being placed in treatment. According to his interview, he had also been a resident in the program from April 2008 until January 2009. He was only home for a few months before he began getting into trouble again and was sent back for further treatment. Later in the interviews, he explained that truancy was not his only reason for getting into trouble; he also had several drug charges.

Uncle Bob hoped that this second stay at the facility would result in a passing score on his GED test, which he was scheduled to take in September 2009. He has been in so much trouble at home, however, that he was to be placed in the group home when he leaves. According to Uncle Bob, going home is not really an option. When discussing the reasons for his placement in treatment, he stated, “I can’t go back home. So, I really don’t care, like, I’m just trying to stay out of trouble so I don’t go upstate. Other than that, I can’t go back home.”

Uncle Bob explained that he is a member of Gang G that formed in the projects of his hometown. However, his file reported that he not only had known ties with another gang, Gang S, but also was a member. His file lists that he has several scars and tattoos on his body that supported membership in this particular gang, which is ironically a known rival of Gang G. As a result, I am unclear with whom Uncle Bob associates or if he reported a false gang tie. These issues will be explored in Chapter Five.

According to Uncle Bob, he became a member of Gang G after he used to “hang with ‘em on the back roads.” As of the interview, he said that he had been a part of Gang G for three years because the people in the gang had become like a family to him. When I asked him how they “convinced him to join the gang,” he stated that they did not have to recruit or convince him to join. Uncle Bob said, “I wouldn’t really say they convinced me. I convinced myself by seeing some of the things they were doing. I was familiar with gangs, and it was like easy money and quick money, too. So, I just really convinced myself.” He claimed later that the only reason he joined or stayed with the gang was because of the money he made selling drugs and committing crimes.

When I asked Uncle Bob about his gang activity in school, at first he stated that “nothing ever really happened at school.” His gang referred to school as a “hot area,” and they were careful at school because the administration, school cops, and teachers were “looking at you all the time.” Thus, all of his gang activity happened just after school or outside of the school building. He also reminded me that his schools had many cameras, “so it’s hot.”

However, during his second interview, Uncle Bob told me that in the beginning of high school, he attended school every day because he was selling his drugs and making money. “And then like, once I found out there was a bunch of other cats that was there selling drugs too, so the competition was harder. And I was like, well, I’m not going. I make more money if I’m at home than I do when I’m here. See what I’m saying? I just stayed at home because I was makin’ more money at home.”

During the first interview, Uncle Bob gave brief answers to my questions and seemed uncomfortable. He shifted in his seat often and rarely made eye contact. However, during the second interview, he appeared more relaxed, taking time to answer my questions. He looked at me directly during most of the interview, which indicated that he felt more comfortable talking to me the second time we met.

I gathered from our first interview that there was more to his expulsion and placement than just truancy, so I asked him more questions regarding his school history during the second interview. He explained more about his experiences when I asked about his expulsions. He stated, “I was expelled from [one school] for having drugs. Then, I got kicked out of [another school] for having drugs, too. I’ve just been kicked out of every place ever since then. And I just had to go back to school when I

got out of here, but I stopped going to school for awhile. They locked me up for truancy and they sent me back here after I did about 30 days.”

He expressed the frustration he had toward his teachers at his different schools who attempted to “try to get you for things.” When I asked him to elaborate, he told me that he had earned a reputation for not coming to school and for the drug charges. He stated, “So the days I would come to school, like they was always watching me real close. I’d go to school high or whatever, but I don’t think they really knew, but I like, I don’t know, I wouldn’t really pay attention to nobody.” On the days when Uncle Bob actually attended school, he spent his days “zoned out.” If he was bored with the lesson, he just got up, walked out, and went home. He said that sometimes “they” caught him trying to leave, and “they’d try to stop me or whatever, but I’d just keep going. I wouldn’t pay attention to them. And then the next day I’d come to school and they would be like, you’ve got in-school detention today.”

Although Uncle Bob enjoyed his friends and even liked his old school, it was not enough to keep him in attendance. His school had a long lunch program during which he would leave school sometimes and then come back. I asked him if he was allowed to leave during long lunches, and he replied “I ain’t saying that, but, I mean, you could. You wouldn’t get caught or nothing.”

As a result of this type of behavior, Uncle Bob’s mother reported him to his Parole Officer. When his Parole Officer obtained his school file, she realized his truancy issue and cited him for a probation violation. Consequently, he was to be sent to a group home; he refused to sign the papers and simply went back home with his mother and stepfather. According to Uncle Bob, his Parole Officer then picked him up and placed him in detention. She told him that he was going upstate to prison until

he was 21 and explained to him that, by refusing his placement at the group home, he had made his own decision to go to prison. Later, his lawyer convinced him to agree to placement in the residential treatment facility, which kept him out of prison.

After his 30 days in detention for the truancy charge, the residential treatment facility decided to take Uncle Bob back into the program in rural Virginia. His other option was to serve four years upstate in prison for his numerous charges. During the interview, he expressed relief that the treatment facility gave him a second chance as he did not want to go to jail. When I asked him why he thought the facility took him back, he stated, “‘Cause the last time I was here, like, I wasn’t really no troublemaker or nothing. I didn’t really get into trouble. I was good the last time I was here. I knew I had to work for it to get out.”

Concerning his teachers, Uncle Bob stated, “I didn’t ever like teachers, for real, for real.” At first, he could not tell me why he disliked teachers. He simply said, “I just didn’t [like them]. I don’t know.” However, as the interview progressed, he was able to better verbalize his negative feelings toward his teachers. He explained that he felt his teachers were “just always trying to get me for whatever, you know what I’m saying? But I just stayed away from the teachers most of the time, and if I had their classes, I just try not to say nothing.”

Uncle Bob described one teacher from his past who was his favorite. His “laid back” History teacher wanted Uncle Bob to do his class work and used compromise as a tactic to encourage him to do his work. In order to motivate Uncle Bob to complete his work, the teacher often allowed him to do part of an assignment but gave him full credit for it.

After we discussed his past schooling experiences, I inquired about his school on the campus of the residential treatment facility. He expressed that school is “the same. [It is a] smaller setting.” He said that he did not have any favorite subjects and did not really enjoy any of the classes. When I asked Uncle Bob to tell me what he did like about the school, he commented that the smaller setting provided help when he needed it.

Uncle Bob later described his relationship with the Dean of Students of the school at the residential treatment facility. He told me that the Dean, Mr. Black, helped him out when he was upset by taking him out of class and playing basketball with him.

Even though Uncle Bob said his teachers at the residential school were helpful, he also mentioned that they were aggravating. He said, “I mean, like I don’t know, they’ll yell at you for no reason. Or, I don’t know, they might have a bad day or something and come off to you wrong, and you just might take it the wrong way and then argue with ’em. And then they got more power, so they – you end up getting wrote up and get in trouble, but I mean, that’s a lose-lose situation, but it just happens on the regular though.”

Uncle Bob then described a situation in which he was irritated with a teacher during a field trip to Luray Caverns. Some of the students were causing trouble and, according to Uncle Bob, one of the teachers was upset with him for horse playing. He stated, “They kind of came off to me like I was a damn little kid, and you know what I’m saying, and they say ‘you play too much’ or something like that, and I wasn’t really doing nothing. And it kind of made me real mad ‘cause he kind of snapped on me for no reason. And I don’t really like that.”

When asked about his other feelings toward his teachers, Uncle Bob conveyed that he did feel “a connection” with a couple of his teachers at the residential treatment facility. He stated that, “A couple of them understand, seems like.” When I asked him to elaborate, he stated simply “‘cause they tell us they understand.” He further explained that some of his teachers took the time to share their personal histories with him; he said that they told him “about some of their stuff they went through in their life.”

Uncle Bob informed me about one of his staff members from New York whom he felt understood his circumstance as he had shared similar experiences growing up. Uncle Bob appreciated that his staff shared with him and was able to connect with him as a result. On the other hand, Uncle Bob said that some of his teachers at the facility had not been through the experiences that he has survived. He said that they are “better” now, so the teachers are always trying to tell him to “better himself.” According to Uncle Bob, “... trying to tell us that we should better ourselves instead of doing the same stuff, it gets boring after awhile.” To follow up, I asked him if he ever listened to his teachers. Despite his earlier negative statements about his teachers, he claimed, “I mean, sometimes [I listen]. But when I’m doing stuff I’m not supposed to be doing, I try and—I try and take some the feedback and like, take it in and try to chill out.”

During our discussion about his teachers and staff and the residential treatment facility, he expressed anger at the staff for “putting his business out.” To explain what he meant, he described how the staff discussed his case to his peers. The staff said to him, in front of other students, that if he made any mistakes while in the program for the second time, he would be placed at the correctional facility upstate

until he was 21. As a result, Uncle Bob felt like other students took advantage of this information and tried to make him angry. If he fought, he would be removed from the program. He said that “some of these kids are trying to test me a lot” and “if I didn’t have no time over my head at all, I’d been fighting a lot probably, in here.”

According to Uncle Bob, fighting “would get his point across” to the other students.

When Uncle Bob and I discussed the concept of “care,” he took lengthy pauses and thought through my questions. He gave short answers to most of my questions about care in both interviews. When I asked him whether there were any adults at his old schools who cared for him, he simply stated, “No,” and then quickly added, “I don’t really care too much how people think of me.” He said that none of his teachers or staff ever reached out to him in school, except for his old basketball coach with whom he had a good relationship. He stated, “I pretty much did everything he asked me to, just got along with him good,” and explained that he thought his coach cared about him because “he knew I was getting into some trouble on the outside, and he was giving me advice about staying out of trouble and things I could do to stay away from trouble.”

In our first interview, Uncle Bob was unsure of how much the teachers or staff at the residential treatment facility cared for him. “I mean, I can’t say no, but, I mean, I don’t know though. I don’t know.” He stated that nothing had ever happened at the school or in his cottage that made him feel like anyone cared for him. However, in the second interview, he told me that he did feel like some of the staff cared for him. He, again, quickly added, “Yeah, but I could care less about what they say about me or what they, how they feel about me. I know I ain’t got much longer here. It’s not—I don’t really like this place.”

When I asked him to explain the above statements, he told me that he disliked how the program was run and that he was mad because he felt like he had to “do much to get a little.” “They’ll talk down to you, but when you try to say something back, they’ll hem you up for it or they’ll call your PO trying to get you in trouble with your PO, you know what I’m saying, it’s just I don’t really respect how they work here.” He says that he tries to stay away from staff who behaves in that way. “I know how they play, so I just don’t really play the game with them. I just stay away from it.”

He later told me that the only reason he tolerated the way the program operated at the facility was because of his desire to stay out of prison. He looked forward to weekends with his mom and turning 18 so that he could be “out of the system.” He was unaware of how long he would be on parole, but he anticipated “they’re never gonna let me off, but I don’t know.”

When exploring the concept of care, I decided to talk to him about his relationships with his gang leaders. He described their relationships as “good.” He believed that his gang leaders cared for him because “when I need something, all I gotta do is ask for it and I’m good.” When Uncle Bob asked for anything from his gang, anything that he needed, the gang provided it for him. In our discussion, the subject of “trust” arose as he was sharing about his relationship with his gang. He used to trust people until he went into foster care. According to Uncle Bob, while he was in foster care, people would “tell me a lot of things, and they never happened.” He did not describe the “things” or who the “people” were. It was at that point in his life that he decided to distrust everyone. “I just taught myself not to trust nobody. Not to really believe what nobody says until it’s really shown or done. Unless I know

a person is down with me, I don't really trust 'em." He stated that he did not even trust anyone in his gang or his family, with the exception of his mother.

Even though he is unconcerned about what his brothers think of him, Uncle Bob was adamantly opposed to them becoming involved with his gang. He had talked to all of his brothers about his gang and told them not to become involved. "I told 'em not to mess with none of that. One of my older brothers had a different thing in his head, so I mean, I don't know, he just, I don't know, it was something he wanted to do." When I asked him why he did not want them in his gang, he said, "I don't want to see them get hurt or nothing."

One of the last things Uncle Bob and I discussed was jail. When I asked him if he felt like he would end up in jail, he responded, "Nah, not if I just keep going the way I'm going now." I then asked him if he was changing his life, to which he replied, "I mean, I wouldn't say I'm changing my life, but I'm getting my priorities done that I need to keep everybody off my back."

As of January 2010, Uncle Bob resides at the group home in Virginia. He is attending GED classes four nights a week and is looking for a job as he failed the test in September 2009.

Case Study 2: James Bond (JB)

James Bond is a 17 year-old male who lived with his aunt and uncle in Virginia prior to his placement at the residential treatment facility. According to his file, both of his parents are deceased. At 5'5", JB is a small-framed, Caucasian male with acne and braces. He entered the conference room wearing his school uniform of khaki pants and a maroon polo. His shirt was un-tucked and his pants were sagging despite the fact that he was wearing a belt. JB had asked that I bring him a double

cheeseburger with no mayo, fries, and a vanilla milkshake. The shake had barely made it all the way to the rural campus and was leaking all over the table when he arrived.

“THANKS! Can I eat this now?” was the first thing he said to me and our first interaction. He did not seem to notice that I had rearranged the room and immediately sat in the chair closet to my materials. When I gave him a positive response, he opened the burger like he had not eaten in weeks and began to take huge bites. “No mayo, right?” he asked through two layers of meat and bread. We engaged in “small talk” as I discreetly checked him for scars or tattoos; he had none that I could see. I realized quickly that between the braces that filled his mouth and his eating, I would have difficulty understanding him for the interview. So, I busied myself flipping through papers and double checking the electronic recording devices while he finished eating. Immediately, he was fascinated with my smart pen recording device and asked some questions about it while he finished his shake.

When he was done eating his burger, he tucked his French fries into his book bag and made a comment to me about “saving these for later.” When he told me he was ready, he gave me a big smile with evidence of the meal he had just eaten remaining in the front part of his braces. Because he was charming and relaxed, I found talking to him easy and enjoyable.

According to his interview, JB was placed in treatment in February 2009. When we spoke in October 2009, he said that he was supposed to be leaving the facility to go home in November. He said that he was ready to go home and felt good about it.

JB was friendly and smiled often during our interview. When I asked him what he liked to do, he replied, “Just sit around the house and get high and play video games.” In addition to playing his favorite football video game called Madden, he also likes to go out with his friends.

According to JB, “going out with his friends” usually meant going to mall or to the movies. JB also said that they would “chill and get high, smoke weed, or go to a party.” He described a night when he and his friends went to a party in a neighboring town where he met a girl, and they drank alcohol and danced. According to him, they had fun and started dating, which continued for the next two months.

In his free time, he liked to draw and sketch mostly tribal symbols and objects because he did not feel that he was talented at drawing cars or people. He also said that he was an athlete and played football and basketball. Although he had made the football team back in his hometown, he was arrested prior to the start of the season and could not play for his team. When I asked him about his position, he said that he was supposed to be the team’s tight end but that he knew nothing about that position. It would have been his first experience on a football team.

When I asked JB why he thought he was chosen to be interviewed, at first he said he did not know anything about it. However, when I inquired again, he explained that it was probably because of his involvement with a gang. He explained that he was a member of the Gang B and had been inducted when he was 13 years old. JB refused to give any more information about his induction or how he became involved with the Gang B. It is important to note that the location of the gang he described is over an hour away from his hometown, a factor that is explored in more detail in Chapter Five.

Before his placement in residential treatment, JB attended the high school in his home town. He liked school because “It was fun, exciting. Yeah, I liked it.” He later clarified that the reason he liked school so much was because of the “pretty girls. Everywhere you look, there is a nice-looking girl, for real.”

Several active gangs existed in his high school, many of which rival gangs that “displayed colors and bandanas” and “threw up” gang signs. He said that there was mostly Gang B and Gang C but not really any “Spanish gangs.” According to JB, most of the gang activity at his high school consisted of tagging with spray paint and gang fights.

JB’s involvement with Gang B caused him to be pulled out of class several times at his school “when my name got brung up and stuff.” He was questioned about his gang spray painting a sign and about some fights. In addition, there was an incident in which another student approached him and was “saying some disrespectful stuff.” While he did not expand and tell me more about what the student had said, he confirmed that it ended in a fight. He also told me that he participated in tagging and gang fights outside of school.

JB said that there was nothing really that he disliked about his high school. Sometimes the fighting bothered him and “got on my nerves,” even though occasionally he engaged in fights over girls. There were times when the students tried to “act tough,” and he disliked those people who were “not being their selves.”

Although JB said he liked school, he was always eager to get home at the end of the school day. He said that at home, “I could do whatever I wanted.” During this same conversation, he changed his mind and decided that he did not like school or the teachers because “when you start talking at school, they get on you.”

During our first interview, I asked him directly how he felt about his teachers at his old school. He replied, “They’re alright. I don’t hate ‘em but I don’t like ‘em either.” According to JB, he could tolerate them all, and there were no teachers whom he did not really like. His teachers did not suspend him but talked to him about his behavior and then “let it go.” He also made the statement that “I ain’t never really like school.” This changing attitude, even in the middle of a conversation, is explored more in Chapter Five.

Our conversation changed to his thoughts and ideas about his schooling on the campus of the residential treatment facility. JB expressed he did not really like the facility or the school, and the school was easy. Although he enjoyed learning about space in science class, overall his classes were boring. Usually, he finished his class work in about 10 minutes and then had the remainder of the 45 minute class to do nothing. He always wanted to put his head down to rest, but the teachers did not allow him to sleep. However, sometimes they would talk with him after he had finished his work. He said, “I talk to ‘em, we have fun, we laugh. Some of the teachers are like a big child.”

JB thought that the teachers on the campus of the treatment facility were better than those from his old school because they were “more relaxed. They let a whole lot of stuff slide. Like stuff that you should get written up for, they might let that go.” Unlike regular school teachers, the teachers at the facility gave several warnings to students about their behavior to allow them a chance to fix it before suffering the consequences.

To better understand JB’s perception of the school, I asked him what “disrespect” looks like in a classroom. According to JB, when he disrespects a

teacher, he may curse her out or not listen to her. When I turned it around and asked what a teacher disrespecting student looks like, he said a teacher ignoring him or cursing him was disrespectful. I followed up by asking him, “You had teachers curse you out?” He said no, but teachers had called him “bad names” before.

Respect in the classroom means that a student is listening to the teacher and doing his work. “If she tells you to do something, you do it, without questions.” JB believes that a teacher respects him when she is responsive. “Like if you ask her something, she helps you if you need it. Like, she is kind and she talks to you and stuff like that.” He feels that a teacher has to show respect to the student first. When offering advice to a first year teacher, he stated, “Don’t let them think you’re a pushover. Um...try to treat everyone equally ‘cause everyone will know if you treat them equally. Try to show respect to kids. Then you’ll get respect back.”

JB believed that all of his teachers at his old school cared for him. When I asked him how he knew that his teachers cared, he replied, “They go out their way to help you.” He told me about a time when he was serving detention after school and his mother could not pick him up. A teacher called for permission from his mother to bring him home. He also explained that he used to be in the office a lot, but he spoke fondly of his principal at his old high school. “That was basically my second home. I stayed in that office. He would always say ‘I know you’re a good kid.’ I actually know I’m a good kid. I just make bad decisions.”

When I asked JB about his favorite teacher, he was quick to name his Physical Education teacher Ms. Bayle his favorite because “she was pretty.” He flirted with her and claimed that she flirted with him as well. “She would flirt back, but understand, we just flirtin.” I asked him about her instruction in the classroom; he

commented that she wrote up students who disobeyed directions. She was always looking out for him, like once when he got into trouble in World History. He was sitting in the hallway, and “she would happen to walk by and ask me what was wrong and I told her. She would tell me to go back to class. She would encourage me to do the right stuff.”

According to JB, Ms. Bayle cared about him, “Not like in love kind of way, but like...she looked out for me. Like...in a teacher way who wants to help a student. But really, to tell you the truth, a bunch of teachers was like that.” His math and science teachers both took the time to talk to him about his problems. When I asked him if he felt that his teachers’ actions made a difference in his education, he replied, “Maybe a bit.” He later explained, “Like they were always trying to help me, so like, there was no reason to disrespect them.”

JB also liked his teachers at the treatment facility and believed they too cared for him. He said, “They’re not like teachers. They’re more like friends. The way they act, the way they talk, it’s not like they talk to you like teachers. They talk to you like friends.” He compared them to his teachers at his old school and said, “They are just like the teachers at my old school. They’ll help you more than could—or more than they got to.” The teachers at the treatment facility give several warnings before issuing consequences because, “I guess they understand like that we are at a group home and not at home and we got a lot of anger and frustration, so I guess they just understand.”

During our interview, JB made the comment that his teachers were always telling him, “You’re so smart.” He stated, “I heard it so much, I actually started to believe it.” He has decided that he wants to turn his life around. When he is released

from treatment, JB hopes to get a job at Arby's or Food Lion and finish the requirements for his diploma. Then he plans to go to school for computer science, hopefully at the University of North Carolina.

Case Study 3: Long Hair

When Long Hair entered the conference room, his first glance went to the bag of snacks and drinks sitting on the table. He shook my hand and then sat in the chair that I had set up next to the door. Long Hair had asked for Gatorade and chips but did not make any specific requests. So, I purchased a variety of flavors so that each participant had a choice. When I offered him the bag of treats and told him to take his pick, Long Hair quickly chose the green apple flavored Gatorade and the barbeque chips, clearly the first thing he touched. He seemed embarrassed to choose and said "Thanks" before putting the snack in his bag lying at his feet.

I immediately noticed his hand and arm tattoos. On his left hand in-between the pointer finger and thumb was a tattoo of the word "Dad" and there was a heart on his right hand between his pointer finger and thumb. On his upper right arm, he had a tattoo of a dot. (Often gang members have these tattoos to mark "work" done by a gang member or to symbolize a visit to a prison or hospital in honor of the gang). Long Hair is a 16-year-old s originally from Georgia where he lived with his father and step mother before being placed at the residential treatment facility. Wearing a purple workout shirt and colorful tennis shoes, Long Hair was friendly and full of energy. During the entire interview, he had a difficult time sitting still and either played with his hair or traced his tattoos with his fingers.

When I first began talking to Long Hair, it was easy to forget that he is a member of one of the most ruthless gangs in Virginia. He chatted excitedly about his

experiences playing soccer and gave me details about his favorite James Patterson book, *VIOLETS ARE BLUE*. He spoke of spending time with his friends, eating out, going to the mall, seeing movies, and playing group games of soccer. As a midfielder, he explained to me that he had to play offense and defense at the same time. “You get the ball and move to the offense, but then they kick the ball and move it over to the defense side, so you have to run all the way down to the defense side and help defense.” He laughed when I commented that “he must run a lot.”

Long Hair dreams of going to college and becoming an FBI agent. Before he was given a chance to change his life around at the treatment facility, he had never imagined even going to college. For the first time in his life, he is on the A and B Honor roll and thinks that he can achieve this goal. “I think I can [do these things] because I have created a new state of mind. Like paying attention and wanting to study more. Back then [before residential treatment], I didn’t think about college. I didn’t think about the importance of my education and the things I could do.”

When I asked Long Hair about his membership in Gang M, he was quick to say that “I’m not actually in the gang, but I was like, most of the times I did something and the cops would arrest me and stuff, I was with them.” However, when I asked Long Hair, “How long have you been in Gang M,” he simply responded, “Coming up two years, I think.” Long Hair then told me the story of how he became involved with Gang M through a party. He stated, “First of all most of us – most of them, they play soccer, I connected to them with that. We like going dancing. We like going to parties.”

Long Hair explained that he did not have any issues with his gang during the school day. After school, however, was another story. Often he and his gang would

go to a friend's house or to the local 7-11 convenient store to hang out. "I remember this one time we went to 7-11 and we just got to fighting with these other people that was in there. I think they were part of another gang. They just starting insulting my people so we just went over there... Well, we were in the store when one guy started mouthing at us. We don't take that, and started fighting."

Before being placed into the treatment facility, Long Hair was a 9th grader whose favorite subjects were Physical Education and World History. He was supposed to be a starter on the soccer team at his school before he was arrested. He said that he enjoyed reading about the two World Wars and loved attending the varsity football games with his girlfriend. "We just all went to the football games, all my friends. Everybody went to the football games. It was just a good time to like, meet new people and be with people." Long Hair expressed that one of the best things about his old school was that the football team made it to the state finals. On the other hand, one of the worst things about his old school was the early classes and having to wake up early for them. He explained that he had to rise at 5:45 am to catch a bus at 6:10 am. "It was just horrible." After school ended at 2:30 pm, he helped his step mother around the house or went outside to "kick around the soccer ball."

According to Long Hair, all of the teachers at his old school were "good." He thought that his perception of teachers had changed because now he "understands more what the teachers are telling [him]." Good teachers went over the work to help him remember it and took the time to talk to him about his "study situation." While Long Hair liked all of his teachers, he did not like all of the subjects he had to take, including language arts which he found "boring."

Long Hair's gym teacher, who was also his soccer coach, was his favorite teacher because he worked closely with the principal to help keep Long Hair out of trouble. For example, his coach "pulled" him out of a situation where he almost got into a fight over his girlfriend. "He pulled me aside and talked to me, and said that the guy wasn't worth it and told me to walk off."

From the teachers at his old school, Long Hair learned lessons about both academics and life. His guidance counselor also gave him advice on picking better friends. "[Real friends], they wouldn't judge you. They ask you to go do something with them but if it's the wrong thing to do and you don't, they respect you." He felt that if he were in a better "state of mind" while he was attending his old school, he may have learned more from his teachers and staff. Long Hair had many ideas about what makes a good teacher. For instance, a "good teacher" is a teacher who will spend quality time with you and give you extra work just to catch you up with assignments. He or she will give you tests when you need it or give you tests just to "see where you are." A "good teacher" was not harsh with his or her students but act in a way "that the kids could understand them." Teachers "don't have to be so mean," but it is okay for a teacher to have strict rules like saying "no talking during class." It is also okay for a "good teacher" to walk around while the students are working, but he or she should not walk around "all the time."

As previously stated, now that Long Hair is attending school on the campus of the residential treatment facility he is an honor roll student. He pays attention in class and does his homework. He felt that the teachers pushed him to make improvements in his life and to make the work "easier to understand," and thus he gives his teachers credit for the dramatic change. The teachers at the facility work with him both in

class and outside of class. They “pull him” out of negative situations in the classroom and redirect any destructive behaviors. “Like, when you’re about to get in an argument with someone, they tell you take a time-out or take a walk with them.”

He also appreciated that the teachers take the time to talk to him about his problems and life skills. When he is done with his work, sometimes they will talk to him about his life and choices. They allow him to watch a movie, play games, or put his head down and rest after he has completed the assignments for the day.

The teachers at the residential treatment facility not only helped Long Hair one-on-one, but they balanced the workload according to the students’ needs. Long Hair told me that “Sometimes they would give me an easy break. They wouldn’t give me homework but I would have to study more. And sometimes, like, they would give me a lot of work, but I know it was only for my well-being in school. Just ‘cause they want me to do better in school, ‘cause when I got here, I was doing horrible in school. Then, I am in good shape now, my grades are all A’s and B’s.”

Unfortunately, Long Hair’s coach was the only adult figure at his old school who he felt cared about him. His coach gave him a ride home from practice and talked to the principal about his failing grades. He also spent time with Long Hair on the weekend, taking him to games or the mall. During these outings, he and the coach discussed his poor decisions and his lack of respect for his parents. Long Hair mentioned that his coach really wanted to meet his parents but never had the opportunity to do so. Whenever his dad was able to attend his soccer games, his assistant coach was in charge, and so the two never had the chance to meet. According to Long Hair, this bothered his coach.

Once Long Hair is released from the residential treatment facility, he is anxious about seeing his coach. When he returns, he and his coach “Would probably have a long talk.” He joked that his coach may ask him, “What did you do THIS time?” Then, he anticipates his coach asking him questions like, “How could you have prevented this from happening?” Long Hair stated that he felt like his coach held him accountable for his actions and, this was an indication that his coach cared for him.

At the treatment facility, however, Long Hair felt care from the teachers. They genuinely tried to help him and always explained the reasons he should or should not make certain decisions. For example, if a student did not have permission to leave a building at the facility, they were considered to be AWOL, or absent without leave. Often when a student became aggravated or frustrated, he may walk out of the school without permission. Long Hair stated that if a student tried to go AWOL, the teachers may talk to them and help them “get through [their] problems.”

Long Hair described an incident in math class where he and another student were about “to get into a fight.” After Long Hair turned over a desk and cursed out the student, his math teacher pulled him out of class to talk to him about the incident. Because Long Hair backed down and calmed down, the math teacher did not write him up for the incident. In another instance, there was a break-in at the residential treatment facility’s campus dining hall, and some of the students named Long Hair as the thief. When the staff confronted him about his potential involvement, Long Hair became angry and aggravated before one of the teachers stepped in to talk to Long Hair. “He wanted to help me and talked me into not doing something stupider. We talked it out outside.” The teacher reminded Long Hair about little sister, Maya, and

how much she missed him while he was away. The teacher told him that if he chose to get into a fight over this, he may be given more time to spend at the facility and would not be able to go home as scheduled. The teacher convinced him not to fight or go AWOL, and as a result, Long Hair felt that this teacher showed care for him because he knew how important his sister was to him.

Long Hair said that the worst of his behavior in class was talking too much because he always tried to make his peers laugh. When he constantly talked, usually his teachers kicked him out of class. He believed that the teachers should have given him a warning first. Later he noted that these teachers did not care for him. However, if he is in a class with a teacher who cares for him, "I am going to do what he tells me. When he tells me to stop, then I am going to stop because he is the teacher and I respect him." Long Hair stated that if he knows a teacher cares for him, he responds differently to direct instruction.

Long Hair plans on getting out of his gang, or "folding his flag," when he is released from residential treatment. Although he committed to being in his gang "for life" when he was inducted, he feels like he can "get out" when he gets home. If his gang disapproves, he stated, "Well, they will just go on with their business. Do what they gotta do." He wants to go to college and join the FBI and maybe even working in the gang unit. When I asked him if he was worried about getting out of his gang and getting into the FBI, he stated, "I am just not a worrier. I just don't get worried about situations. I just do what I can."

Case Study 4: Anonymous

Anonymous greeted me with a smile and firm handshake as he entered the conference room. He was wearing his school uniform; his shirt was neatly tucked in

and his khakis were clean and pressed. Smiling at the Hardees bag on the table, he motioned to it, as if asking to have the burger, chicken strips, and the French fries that were inside. "Please, help yourself," I replied to the gesture, and he opened the bag and inhaled deeply. "Nothing like fried food," he stated before taking two fries from the bag and then folding down the top. As an afterthought, he asked if I wanted some of his lunch. "No, thanks, but I appreciate the thought," I responded. "Well, I am thoughtful kind of guy," he grinned back at me and ate his two fries.

Anonymous patiently sat in the chair as he waited for me to finish setting up the recording equipment. He looked over the interview questions and took a few more bites of his fries. When I announced that I was ready, he sat back in his chair and took a deep breath. I was uncertain if he was nervous or excited to have been asked to participate in the study. His file lists Anonymous' maternal grandmother as his guardian since his mother was "in and out" of his life. He has had many school issues and trouble with the police in his hometown, which has resulted in his placement at the residential treatment facility. While gang activity was not listed as a concern in his file, the name of his gang was tattooed on his arm in large, scripted letters.

Anonymous is a 16-year-old who likes to "chill and go to parties...go to the mall...shop," for Nike tennis shoes with laces. According to Anonymous, "chill" means "hanging out. Relaxing. Laid back." When I asked him about his talents, he replied, "I'm just real good at working. That's all I'm good at. I just can't stay on focus. I'm just real good at working." He likes "to get things running," as revealed by his interest working on cars. Later in our discussions, however, he admits that he

enjoys playing sports like football and soccer. While he has never been on a sports team, he loves the challenge of both games and having fun with his friends.

Before being placed in residential treatment, Anonymous was in the eighth grade. As a result of his continuing disciplinary issues, he attended school for only two class periods a day. "I was on a modified schedule. I was in one classroom the whole time with just a couple of other people." He felt that his modified schedule helped him stay out of trouble because he was there for only a little while. "I couldn't put in a full day 'cause I'd just end up getting suspended." He explained to me that he would rather go to the mall or sleep than be in school.

As a member of Gang C "for as long as I can remember," Anonymous admits to getting into a lot of trouble. He told me the story of being "beat in" to the gang when he was 13 by at least 12 other gang members. "I started hanging with them every day, then came into some trouble and stuff. I got kicked out of school. I got suspended just about every day."

Being in Gang C meant constant fighting for Anonymous. He even described a fight that happened at school between the middle and high school sections of the building. According to Anonymous, someone "threw up some gang signs." What began as verbal banter turned into a physical altercation. "Everybody be fighting. There were like three [Gang B members] and mostly everybody in there was [Gang C.] And so, we were just chilling and stuff. And they were running their mouths to one of my partners. We just got to banging. It was a bad fight. That was probably the worst day." Some of the rival gang members eventually stopped and disappeared before the administrators could break up the fight.

During his three years with Gang C, Anonymous was charged with petty larceny, curfew violations, and possession of drugs. One time he got into trouble because of a girl that he was “hanging with,” a member of Gang C, “who dressed like a dude.” “We would do dumb stuff. And then I would always end up having to take the fall for it ’cause she would always somehow figure out how to put the blame on me or something and I would always get in trouble for it.”

One night, Anonymous and his girlfriend were “chilling at a hotel” with some other members of Gang C. When the girl’s father learned there was underage drinking, he reported Anonymous to his probation officer. Apparently the girl claimed that she was not even at the party; and while she suffered no consequences for her behavior, Anonymous received a probation violation. He and the girl are no longer friends, but during one of our discussions, he admitted that he missed her.

Anonymous stated that the best part of his former school was the teachers because they were more “chilled out” than the teachers at the residential treatment facility. The teachers from his old school often sat down with him to discuss his problems. “They wouldn’t yell at you...like other teachers. They wouldn’t be yelling at you to do your homework all the time. They tell you one time or you were going to fail. They drop you a grade or something.”

Once he was about to be sent to a substance abuse program called “the sanctuary,” and one of his teachers, Mr. Booth, offered him advice on how to handle this situation with his parole officer. In Anonymous’ perspective, the advice proved to be successful, he was not sent to the substance abuse program, and, as a result, Mr. Booth became his favorite teacher at his old school.

However, Anonymous did not like the principal at his old school. Apparently, she refused to give him a free bus pass to ride the bus because of his constant disciplinary issues. Anonymous believed that because he had never been suspended from the bus before he should be allowed to have the bus pass like the other students.

Anonymous knew that Mr. Booth, in contrast, cared for him because “he treated all kids equal.” Other than this connection to Mr. Booth, Anonymous could not articulate what it was like to be cared for until we spoke of his grandmother. When I asked him how he knew that his grandmother cared for him, he replied, “She tells me all the time. She helps me out when I need it. She gives me money. She gives me a house; she gives me something to eat.” Even though his grandmother grounded him when she discovered his drugs and reported him to his parole officer, he still felt like she cared about his well-being.

Mr. Booth was the type of teacher who did not force his students to complete their work. Anonymous described Mr. Booth as “encouraging” him to do his work by telling “us when we grow up and get a job and get to college and stuff; you need to do your work. So, I did my work.”

Anonymous spoke about staying “on track.” During our first interview, he explained that he had been “off track” but was planning to “get back on track” with his schooling. During our second interview, he stated that “I just started doing what I had to do. I got on a new medicine. ‘Cause I never been on medicine before. But I got on a medicine to help me focus on my school work and stuff. And I got on track with it. And I have been on it for like, three or four weeks now.”

Something else that was helping Anonymous stay on track was the teachers at the residential treatment facility who were allowing him to do his work in the

hallway, away from the distractions of the other students. Other kids talking constantly kept him from getting his work done, so he requested to be allowed to work in a quiet, more focused environment.

However, at the treatment facility, Anonymous did not like his teachers in general because they were “fake” and did not know him; instead they “take it to the extent and get in your face.” The day before the first interview, he had just been kicked out of a class for “helping someone.” Because this incident was on his mind during the first interview, he could not think of anything positive to say about his teachers.

Anonymous is often bored in his classes and told me that he disliked all of the teachers at the facility, especially Mr. Chennault who bothered and annoyed him. He described Mr. Chennault as “spiritual.” Anonymous does not like him because, “He’s weird and says ‘You don’t say shut up. You say be quiet.’ He acts like you’re going to do something and I don’t listen to nobody. If I don’t want to listen to them, I don’t listen to them.”

In his schooling experiences, both at his home school and at the facility, Anonymous felt like the teachers did not act as if they cared for him. “They ain’t act like it. All they act like is they care about themselves.” When I asked him to clarify his statement, he was unable to communicate what he meant except for “It is like they are just there for a job, ‘cause they got to do it. You see? Make the money. You know?” He could not offer any examples of being cared for by his teachers.

Anonymous said that in order for a teacher to show care, he or she must, “Talk to ‘em [the students]. Not yell at ‘em.” In his schooling experiences, teachers yelled at him, and then he got written up. At his old schools, he did not care that he got

written up because there were no consequences that upset him; however, at the treatment facility, the opposite response occurred. A write-up meant that he was not able to go home for visits and the amount of time he had to serve at the facility could be extended and was therefore upsetting to him.

During our final interview, Anonymous spoke of a newly developed relationship with Mr. Jade, the school principal at the treatment facility. Since my first visit to the campus to interview him, he had spent time in Mr. Jade's office. "We hang out sometimes, not hang out hang out, but hang out around the school sometimes when I don't feel like going to class." He admitted, however, that sometimes Mr. Jade would "kick him out" of his office and force him to go to class and do his work.

Anonymous believed that Mr. Jade did indeed care about him because, "I think he cares about everybody." When I asked him to give me an example of how he knew Mr. Jade cared about him, he replied, "I don't know." After a half minute or so, he added, "He helps me out a lot. He just does what he has to, um; he's a funny dude though." He appreciated Mr. Jade's efforts to tell him jokes and seemed to feel comfortable in the principal's office.

Throughout our discussions, Anonymous mentioned a staff member at the residential facility whom he felt may care for him. He told me about Mr. Henderson, a cottage staff member, who had advocated for Anonymous to receive several home visits. As going home was the most important thing to Anonymous, to him this was a sign that Mr. Henderson cared about him. Mr. Henderson and Anonymous also connected as they lived in the same neighborhood. Although he could not verbalize his connection to Mr. Henderson, he said that Mr. Henderson was "chill" and "true."

Later, when I asked him to define “true,” he said that a true person, “just act real. I mean, they don’t lie about stuff. They just keep it real.”

Anonymous was the type of student who liked to “try to act funny all the time” in the classroom. One of his favorite activities was to write “stuff on the board I won’t suppose to,” like “crazy math problems” or gang signs. He liked to make people laugh, even his teachers, although it usually got him into trouble. Often his teachers excused him from the classroom when he was acting silly and sent him into the hallway or to the principal’s office. He agreed that it was the right thing for the teachers to do because he should not have been distracting the other students. However, if he were a teacher and he had a student who was acting silly, “I would take them out the class and talk to ‘em. Then I would let them come back to class. If they didn’t work and all, I would just send ‘em to another class.” According to Anonymous, no teacher ever pulled him out of class to personally address his behavior.

After several hours of interview time, Anonymous was able to better articulate what care looked like from teacher to student. He described a caring relationship as the teacher and student “doing things” that they both liked to do. In his entire schooling experiences, he was only able to inform me of three teachers who showed him that they cared for him. He remembered a fifth grade teacher who used to write him letters to “check up on him.” In fact, she still sent him cards occasionally. Then there was his elementary school teacher who, during the summer after he took her class, picked him up and took him to a pool in her apartment complex several times. He had fond memories of swimming with her and her boyfriend. When I asked him

to sum up his idea of how teachers could show care towards students, he simply replied, “Just get closer to your students.”

At the time of our last interview, Anonymous had stopped doing drugs and was actively trying to get better grades in school. When he gets out of the residential treatment facility, he wants to finish his GED and get a job working on cars. He has dreams of going to the University of Virginia or Virginia Tech to study architecture.

Looking at the Data

The following tables compare and contrast the information derived from the interviews. Table 2 highlights each student’s involvement with his gang and participation in gang activities. It is important to note, however, that this information is based solely on what was learned in the interview process. Information that was gathered from the files was not used for Table 2 due to the IRB stipulation that only aggregate information be obtained from the files.

Table 2

Gang Induction and Activities

Name	Age	Gang	Age Inducted	Drug/Alcohol Use	Fighting	Tagging
Uncle Bob	17	Gang G	14	Yes	Yes	No
JB	17	Gang B	13	Yes	Yes	Yes
Long Hair	16	Gang M	14	No	Yes	No
Anonymous	16	Gang C	13	Yes	Yes	No

All four interviewees were inducted into their gangs between the ages of 13 and 14. All had been active in fighting, a common gang activity. However, only one

of the four students, JB, admitted to participation in tagging, which is using graffiti to mark gang territory. One student, Anonymous, stated that his group did not participate in tagging even though this activity is considered common in gangs. Long Hair was the only student who did not admit to using drugs or alcohol, but it was not something that we discussed in his interviews. Other gang activities discussed included larceny and selling drugs; only Uncle Bob admitted to selling drugs. He was also the only student who spoke of being in trouble for truancy. Anonymous was the only student who mentioned being charged with larceny.

Chapter Five analyzes and discusses these four students and their activities as “typical” gang members with common gang experiences. The literature suggests that many gang members would share similar experiences.

Perceptions of Schooling

To understand the perceptions of the participants about their schooling experiences, it is important to review common themes that developed during the interview process. They included boredom with school, a love of sporting activities, and the enjoyment of social activities. Table 3 illustrates these commonalities in school perceptions.

Table 3

Perceptions of Schooling

Name	Social Aspect	Sports	Enjoyed Subjects	Attitude about School
Uncle Bob	Yes	Yes, basketball	Yes, Gym	Boring
JB	Yes	Yes, football	No	Boring
Long Hair	Yes	Yes, soccer	Yes, History and Gym	Boring
Anonymous	Yes	Yes, football	No	Boring

To expand on the commonality of socialization, all students stated that the social aspect of schooling was something they enjoyed. Uncle Bob said that he liked his old school because so many of his friends attended. He also told me that he would often visit his friends during the school's hour and half lunch period. JB enjoyed the social aspect of schooling with his gang. These social aspects included gang activities that occurred during the school day, like fights and "displaying gang signs." JB commented that the girls at the school made it "fun and exciting." Long Hair talked about the fun that he had at football games and other sporting events. "We just, um, all went to the football games—all my friends. Everybody went to the football games. It was just a good time, to like, meet new people and be with people." Last, Anonymous told stories of joking around with his peers in the classroom.

Another commonality across schooling experiences consisted of a love of sports. All four of the young men spoke of playing on sports teams or about gym class and how playing sports was something they enjoyed. Uncle Bob loved basketball and talked about some of his experiences on his school's basketball team. In fact, some days the only reason he came to school was because his class was scheduled to have gym and he could play basketball. "The only good days I liked at my school were gym [days] because I got to play basketball or whatever. I didn't like going to class, but I didn't like, mind going to school the days I had gym." JB claimed to have been chosen for his school's football team right before he was "locked up." Long Hair was on his school's soccer team and spent many afternoons working on his soccer skills both by himself and with his friends. Anonymous enjoyed playing football even though he had never been part of a team before and

stated that he liked “playing all positions.” The students’ participation in sports and the sincerity of their statements will be discussed in Chapter Five.

The last common thread among the participants’ testimony was that each of them perceived school as boring. Uncle Bob explained that when he became bored at his old school, he would “just walk out and go home.” He also discussed schooling at the residential treatment facility and stated, “It gets boring after a while, so you try to make it funny or make it interesting, but whenever that happens, it’s always some trouble happening, so it’s never really fun at all, for real.” JB also said that classes at the treatment facility were “...boring. I do my work within the first ten minutes and you’re not allowed to put your head down, so for the next 35 minutes, you’re just bored.” Long Hair too had experiences in schooling where he became bored. His language arts class at his former school was so boring he did not like attending class. Last, Anonymous also felt bored with his schooling. He said that the worst part of school was being finished with his work, as “...when I get done with my work, I’d get bored.”

Both Uncle Bob and Long Hair enjoyed certain subjects and this helped with their schooling experience. As discussed previously, Uncle Bob enjoyed his gym class and came to school just to go gym class. Long Hair loved taking World History at both of his schools; World History was his favorite subject and he enjoyed learning about the World Wars. Both of these classes seem to motivate the students to attend school, even if it were only for a few days. This factor will be analyzed in Chapter Five.

Perceptions of Teachers and Care

These interviews resulted in different perceptions of teachers based on whether or not the student “liked” or “disliked” the teacher. Whereas some of the categories may seem vague, each is in the words of the participants. Table 4 illustrates common perceptions of teachers, beginning with the reasons that the students disliked some of their teachers. I will expand on the perceptions below the table and will analyze them in Chapter 5.

Table 4a

Student Perceptions: Reasons to Dislike Teachers

Name	Trying to “get me”	Aggravating	Ignoring	Talking Down to me/Threatening
Uncle Bob	X	X		X
JB			X	
Long Hair				
Anonymous	X	X		X

The students interviewed disliked some of their teachers for four main reasons. These four reasons included the perception that the teachers were “trying to get” him, the teachers were aggravating, the teachers ignored him, or the teachers talked down to or threatened him. Uncle Bob stated, “I didn’t ever like teachers, for real for real.”

First, several of the students perceived their teachers as “trying to get” them. For the purposes of this research, “trying to get” them means that a teacher or adult figure looked for reasons to punish the student. Uncle Bob explained to me that he

had built a reputation at his former school for not coming to school and for selling drugs. As a result, on the days that he did attend school, he felt like the teachers were watching him “real close,” as if they were trying to catch Uncle Bob doing something wrong. Anonymous had a similar experience when his principal refused to help him obtain a bus pass because of the trouble he had been in before. He stated, “She said I got suspended too much. She thought I’d get suspended, but I never got suspended on any bus. I still rode the bus. I mean I had to pay, but I still rode the bus. She said I got in trouble on the bus. She said she had reasons.”

Another reason the students did not like their teachers and administrators was because they “aggravated” them. Uncle Bob became aggravated by his teachers when they yelled at him for what he perceived to be “no reason.” He added “Or, I don’t know, they might have a bad day or something and come off to you wrong and you just might take it the wrong way and then argue with ‘em. And then they got more power, so they—you end up getting wrote up and get in trouble. But I mean, that’s a lose-lose situation, but it just happens on the regular though.” Anonymous stated that many of his teachers “got on his nerves.” When I asked him how they aggravated him, he replied, “Trying to make me do work. I didn’t want to do no work. I hated work.” According to Anonymous, he responded better when a teacher “encouraged” him to do the work.

One of the participants interviewed for this study did not like his teachers whom he perceived as ignoring him. JB expressed several times that being ignored bothered him and he considered it to be disrespectful. He stated, “Like if you need help, and the other kid needs help, but you raised your hand first and she goes and

helps him, and she is closer to you. That is kind of disrespectful because she kind of ignored you.”

“Talking down” to the students or threatening the students is another factor that caused the participants to dislike certain teachers. For the purposes of this research, “talking down” is speaking in a manner the student perceives as belittling or threatening. Uncle Bob discussed how the teachers and staff at the treatment facility would “talk down” to him and treat him like he was a child, stating, “I don’t know – they’ll talk down to you, but when you try to say something back, they’ll hem you up for it or they’ll call your P.O.” He also struggled with a staff member who seemed to be threatening him yet also spoke to him like he was a child. Uncle Bob recalled, “When people try to tell me – I hate people talking down on me – he really looking at me like ‘I’ll hurt you,’ then talk to me like I’m a little kid? That jahnke makes me real mad.”

Anonymous also had classroom experiences where the teacher “talked down” to him or threatened him. Often teachers threatened to write him up if he refused to do his work, “‘Cause they would say if I don’t do it they would write me up for insubordination.” Anonymous did not respond to these types of threats at his former school and refused to do his work. However, at the treatment facility, the threat of a write up had a different effect on him. As discussed earlier, if he received a write up he may lose his home visits, which were important to him. While he disliked the teacher who threatened to write him up, he responded to it, saying, “‘Cause, if you get written up you can’t go home. So....I don’t want to get written up.”

Long Hair did not have anything negative to say about any of his teachers or staff. In fact, he took responsibility for not learning from his teachers at his former

school and stated, “If I were there today in my state of mind I’m in right now at [the treatment facility], I could have taken the stuff that they gave me and used it to not be in my situation that I’m in right now.”

Table 4b below represents the reasons that these four students liked their teachers. The students in this study liked teachers who were “chill,” teachers who did not bother or “jump on” their students, teachers who were helpful, teachers who were honest and true, and teachers who had clear expectations. All students expressed that they liked teachers who were helpful. The factors will be explored and analyzed in Chapter Five.

Table 4b

Student Perceptions: Reasons to Like Teachers

Name	“Chill”	Don’t bother/jump on students	Helpful	Honest/True	Clear Expectations
Uncle Bob	X	X	X		
JB	X	X	X		X
Long Hair			X		X
Anonymous	X	X	X	X	

Being helpful was one reason the participants liked their teachers, and was a consistent factor in all of the interviews. Uncle Bob explained that while he did not really like his teachers, he appreciated the fact that at the treatment facility he could receive help when he needed it. He stated, “It’s such a small setting that if you need help, you can get help. Right there and now. You don’t have to wait, come back

another block or nothing like that ‘cause there’s another class in there. So, if you need help, it’s such a small setting, the teacher can help right then and there.” He also spoke of a teacher at his former school who he respected, his history teacher. “Like if I was behind in school work, he would compromise with me. He wouldn’t just tell me, ‘well you need to get it done.’ He like, always helped me out, compromised with me.” In addition, at the residential treatment facility an administrator helped Uncle Bob. He explained, “He just like, when I’m in a bad mood or when I’m about to fight with somebody, like, he just like kind of helps me, you know what I’m saying, draw my attention away from doing the negative stuff, from getting myself in trouble.”

JB perceives “good teachers” as teachers who will “go out of their way to help you.” He liked his teachers who were helpful and was able to link “helpful” to care, which will be discussed in more detail in Chapter Five. While Anonymous associated care with being helpful, Long Hair gives credit to his helpful teachers at the residential treatment facility for his improved grades. He said, “They pushed us harder and harder here. They do lots of stuff just to help us with our grades.” He also talked about his language arts class that he disliked because it was “boring,” but he really liked the teacher. “She was a nice – well, she was nice. She was a nice lady – she tried to help me with my work and try to catch up. Yeah.” Last, he told a story of his math teacher helping him out at the treatment facility. “One time, I was about to get into a fight with this kid at [the treatment facility] in class. It was math class, and my teacher – he pulled me away and said, ‘I’m not gonna write you up because I feel like, just for the simple fact that I feel like you just got angry at the moment, and you should just walk away from the situation.’”

Anonymous stated in his description of a perfect school that the teachers, "...would be nice. All of them would be chilled out, help you do your work." He shared how a teacher helped him talk to his parole officer; his teacher gave him helpful advice that resulted in him not being placed in a substance abuse facility. "I was having problems with my probation officer about sending me to the sanctuary and I was just sittin' down and talking to him telling him I didn't want to go to the sanctuary and whatever, and he was like, he gave me some suggestions of what to do and stuff and how to talk to my PO and so yeah....that helped." Anonymous was also able to link the teachers being helpful to the teachers caring for him, which will be discussed in detail in Chapter Five.

Another factor three of the four students liked about some of their teachers was that they were "chill." For the purposes of this research, a "chill" teacher is a teacher who is relaxed and laid back. A "chill" teacher does not yell at the students or "get in their faces." Uncle Bob stated he liked his history teacher because "He was pretty much laid back. He just expected you to do his class work and then other than that, he was alright. But I mean, I don't know, he was chill and all." He added later, "He was kinda chill, and we ain't never really had a problem." JB discussed his favorite teacher who "...would talk to me and calm me down and stuff like that." He also spoke in general about his teachers at his old school. He stated, "I mean, they was teachers but they weren't like the extreme-like-teachers, your suspended-type teacher. They'd get on you and then they'd talk to you and let it go."

Anonymous said that he liked his teachers from his old school better than the teachers at the residential treatment facility because, "They were more chilled out than regular teachers here. They'd sit down and talk to you if you were having

problem. For real.” When I asked him to clarify what he meant by “chilled out” he stated, “They wouldn’t yell at you... like other teachers; they wouldn’t be yelling at you to get your homework in all the time. They tell you one time or you were going to fail. They drop you a grade or something.”

Another theme that resulted from these interviews is the perception that the teachers who “don’t bother” or “don’t jump on” the students are liked. Uncle Bob again referenced his favorite history teacher who did not “bother” anyone. He stated, “[He] didn’t really bother nobody or make nobody mad or nothing.” JB said that he could tolerate his teachers who, “as soon as you do something little, they don’t just jump on you.” Anonymous explained that in his “perfect school” the teachers “they don’t really say nothing to you. They just give you your work and let you do whatever.”

Two other factors that students liked about their teachers were honesty or “being true,” and teachers who set clear expectations. According to Anonymous, who prefers teachers who are honest with him, being “true” means, “They just act real. I mean, they don’t lie about stuff. They just keep it real.” Both JB and Long Hair prefer teachers who set clear expectations. JB talked about his P.E. teacher and, “Well, if you didn’t do what she says, you get wrote up.” Long Hair feels that “the teachers do have to have some strict rules,” as the rules help keep the students working.

The perceptions of the students were all based on their personal experiences in the classroom and with their teachers. This information was gained only from the interviews conducted. I did not collect any information from their files in regards to

their perceptions of their teachers, nor was I able to participate in classroom observations.

In this study, often a student liking a teacher meant that he felt cared for by this teacher. However, this may not always be true. According to his interview, while Uncle Bob “liked” one of his teachers, he had not felt cared for by many of them. Long Hair “liked” all of his teachers, but had only felt care from two or three in his entire schooling experience. As the students separated these two emotions, I have done so as well in the following table. Table 5 highlights the care themes and the students who felt cared for by this action.

Table 5

Caring perceptions: Ways students felt cared for

Name	Knows Student	Spends One-on- One time	Says It	Understan ds Me	Providing for needs/looks out for me	Talks to me/advice/ sharing	Helps me out
Uncle Bob	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
JB		X	X	X	X	X	X
Long Hair	X	X		X	X	X	X
Anonymous	X	X	X		X	X	X

In order for a student to feel cared for, he must perceive that the teacher cares for him. There were two categories that all four students felt demonstrated care coming from a teacher or adult figure at the school. The first category of care is the teacher talking to him, offering advice, or sharing personal experiences. Uncle Bob stated in his interview that his teachers may “sometimes share some of their, their like

home, past history or whatever –what happened and let us know about some of their stuff they went through in their life.” He also felt that one of his coaches “probably” cared for him because “he knew I was getting into some trouble on the outside, and he was giving me advice about staying out of trouble and things I could do to stay away from the trouble.” Uncle Bob shared about one of his staff members at the residential treatment facility. “He [the staff member] says it [their life] might not have been as rough as we had it...I remember him telling me a couple days ago that this kid – this kid, you know what I’m saying, this kid, he was trying to put a gun to his head, or whatever, he was scared as hell. He didn’t know what to do...I can relate, he can relate to some of the stuff that’s happened to us – we can relate to some of the stuff that’s happened to him.”

JB also felt cared for by his teachers when they shared with him or talked to him about his problems. His favorite P.E. teacher spent time encouraging him to do “the right stuff.” His math teacher and science teacher also helped talk him through issues and offered advice such as, “You’re not going to like everything.” Long Hair had some similar experiences at his schools and said that he knew that teachers at the treatment facility cared about him because, “They would help us get through our problems.”

Anonymous told several stories about one of his staff at the treatment facility talking to him and helping him through some difficult times. This staff member offered him advice on how to better communicate with his parole officer. As another example of his perception of care, Anonymous also described how he may handle an unruly student in his classroom. He stated, “I would take them out of the class and

talk to ‘em. Then, I would let them back in class.” One-on-one discussion with a student demonstrated caring to these participants.

The second way that all of the participants felt care was when the teachers “helped them out.” Uncle Bob spoke highly of an administrator who helped Uncle Bob out many times by allowing him to listen to music to calm down or by taking him to shoot basketball if he was having a rough day. JB stated that the teachers at his old school, “They go out of their way to help you.” As an example, he discussed a teacher taking him home after school one day when his mother could not pick him up.

Long Hair felt like his teachers helping him out showed him that they cared because “If they didn’t care about us, they wouldn’t be helping us out the way they help us here.” He talked about an incident where his math teacher pulled him out of class to help him keep from getting into a fight. Long Hair stated that he knew that a teacher cared for him when “a teacher spends more time with you or tries to help you out with homework.”

Last, Anonymous associated “care” with “help” when I asked him if any of the teachers at the residential treatment facility cared about him. He felt like a staff member did care for him because, “He helps me out a lot.” During his second interview, I asked a similar question about whether or not his principal at the treatment facility cared for him and he stated, “He helps me out a lot.” Anonymous felt strongly that if a teacher cared for him, he or she was willing to help him out.

All of the four students felt that it was important for a teacher to get to know their students. This sentiment was also closely related to the fact that students felt cared for when the teacher or staff would spend one on one time with them. Uncle Bob felt that a teacher cared for him if he or she took time to get to know him or spent

time with him. JB also believed that spending time with him showed care. He discussed the teachers at the residential treatment facility spending time with him after he was done with his work talking and laughing. He also enjoyed the time that his P.E. at his former school spent with him talking and sharing with him. Long Hair said his coach spent, “one-on-one” time with him and helped him improve his soccer skills. These teachers showed care toward Long Hair by helping him get caught up with his work and prepare for tests. He stated that teachers cared who would “spend lots of quality time with you, like one-on-one time with you.”

Long Hair also felt that it was important for teachers to get to know their students in order to help them. After he told me about the math teacher talking to him about his family, he realized that many teachers had been there with him “through hard times.” He stated that it was important for the teacher to “know the face of the kid going through hard times. And knows not to bother him, or if he needs to talk, then they talk.” Again, the idea of knowing the student and spending time with the student unfolded as a theme.

Anonymous shared that the one thing he felt demonstrated care from a teacher to student was spending time together outside of the classroom. He said that if a teacher cared for him, “We would probably be hanging out all the time and stuff. Doing stuff that I like to do and that he likes to do.” He had an experience in the past where at a teacher who cared for him picked him up and took him swimming during the summer, which helped him form this idea of care. He also felt care from the residential treatment facility’s principal who allowed Anonymous to “hang out” in his office and talk. Lastly, one of the staff members at the facility showed care because they could “chill” together. His closing interview statement was a message to

teachers about how to care for their students, stating, “Just get closer with your students.”

Three of the four students felt that care from a teacher to student was spoken aloud. Of these three, two of them linked this concept of care to being understood. Uncle Bob feels that some of his teachers understand him. He said that a teacher cares for him when he or she understands him and says it, stating, “Cause they tell us they understand.” He added that a teacher in his perfect school would “probably have a better understanding of how we’re feeling being in the situation we’re in.” JB believed that his teachers at the residential treatment facility “understand like that we are at a group home and not at home and we got a lot of anger and frustration so I guess they just understand.” He felt care when the principal at his former school told him that he was “a good kid.” JB expressed that he had heard from many of teachers and administrators that he was “a good kid,” and he was “actually starting to believe it.”

Long Hair felt that teachers who understood him and what he had experienced in his life cared for him. He said that teachers who cared for him would speak to him in a “loud, understanding voice.” Anonymous added that teachers who cared for him would just say it, for example, “If I didn’t really care about you I wouldn’t be helping you right now.”

The last category of care perceptions expressed by the students is that teachers and staff who cared for them would provide for them. Uncle Bob, who had not experienced much care from his teachers, felt that he knew that his gang cared for him because they provided for him. “Cause when I need something, all I gotta do is ask for it and I’m good.” He would not go into detail about what his gang provided for

him that his teachers did not. Similar to Uncle Bob, Anonymous had a difficult time feeling cared for by his teachers, but was able to articulate what care looked like from his grandmother. According to Anonymous, he knows that his grandmother cared for him because she helps him out, gives him a place to live and food to eat, and gives him money.

JB stated that he knew his teachers cared for him when they “looked out” for him. Long Hair felt cared for when his principal “tried to keep him out of trouble.” His soccer coach also provided for him, offering him rides after practices and working with him on his school work so that he could play in games. All four participants associated being provided for and “looked out” for with being shown care.

Self-protective factors

Another factor that will be analyzed in Chapter Five is the Self-protective factors that were demonstrated by the two of the students. Their attitudes about care may have protected them from being hurt when they did not feel like anyone cared for them; these Self-protective factors may have also kept them from feeling cared for within their schooling experiences. For example, Uncle Bob made the statement several times that he did not care “what people think of me.” I asked Uncle Bob to explain further his profound statement “I don’t really care too much how people think of me.” He stated that his mother was the only person who he cared about what she thought of him. “As long as my mom knows I’m a good person, I don’t really care.” He did not even care what his family, including his brothers, thought of him. “I could care less about what my family [thinks], how much my family sees me or what they think of me.” He later said that he did not even really care what his fellow gang members thought of him. He said, “I don’t really...get close to people like that.”

Anonymous began his interviews saying that he did not like anything about the residential treatment facility. He stated, “It’s not a real school” and “The teachers are fake.” By the time I returned for follow up interviews, his attitude had somewhat changed and he was able to discuss some positive experiences.

Conclusion

In conclusion, there were many similarities and some differences in the way that the students interviewed perceived schooling and care. Each individual student was able to share some ideas and thoughts on caring in schools. The data that has been outlined in the above pages are analyzed in detail in Chapter Five.

There were many factors that contributed to these gang members feeling cared for during their schooling experiences. The literature outlined directed me to hear the stories of the gang members, study their words, and find out more about their perspective on their school experiences. By using narrative research, the study has presented the views of caring as articulated by the students. By listening to their stories, I have gained insight on the affect of individual teachers on students in gangs. It was my desire to better understand how teachers and administrators can better serve this population of students in schools. In addition, it is my hope that teachers will be aided in relating to the issues they are dealing in classrooms and develop their own solutions to difficult situations that stem from teaching gang members.

Chapter 5: When We Listen to their Voices

Conclusions

This final chapter analyzes the gang members' perceptions of their schooling experiences, teachers, and the care experienced during their school years. The first section of this chapter highlights the gang activities of each participant and examines the impact of gang life on schooling. The second section analyzes their perceptions of their experiences in school. The third section discusses each participant's view of his teachers and the care received during his attendance at various schools. Section four discusses other components of the study that need to be analyzed in order to gain a full view of the findings. The final section of Chapter Five presents the implications for policy, practice, and further research.

Membership and Activities

The literature outlines a definition of "a gang" that consists of several components. According to the Virginia Code, in order for a youth to be in a gang he or she must be a part of group that consists of three or more participants who commit criminal activities and identify with each other through colors and symbols. Delaney (2006) adds to this picture of a gang member by stating that most gang members are males who love to fight, wear certain colors and styles, have tattoos, and sell drugs. According to all of these characteristics, each participant in the study is a gang member. Below is the Table 2 that highlights the characteristics of each student.

Table 2*Gang Induction and Activities*

		Age		Drug/Alcohol		
Name	Age	Gang	Inducted	Use	Fighting	Tagging
Uncle Bob	17	Gang G	14	Yes	Yes	No
JB	17	Gang B	13	Yes	Yes	Yes
Long Hair	16	Gang M	14	No	Yes	No
Anonymous	16	Gang C	13	Yes	Yes	No

Each interviewee participated in illegal activities with his gang; three students reported the under aged use of alcohol. While only one student admitted to participation in tagging, or using graffiti to mark gang territory, all of the other three students told stories of other illegal gang activity that would indicate true membership in a gang. Uncle Bob bought and sold drugs, JB smoked marijuana and participated in gang fights, and Long Hair told stories of fights and gang parties. In fact, all four of the boys had participated in both gang related and non-gang related fights; fighting was the common factor of all of their gang activities.

As each student came to the interviews in their school uniforms, it was hard for me to comment on their style of dress as a factor to identify them as gang

members. Whereas Long Hair did attend one of his interviews in his regular clothing, he wore work out attire that did not strike me as being gang related. There were visible tattoos on two of the boys; both Anonymous and Long Hair had tattoos that were easily identifiable with local gangs and gang activities. Long Hair had a dot on his arm that may represent “putting in work,” which means he may have participated in something illegal in the name of the gang. He also had two small tattoos on his hand that may also have been gang related. Anonymous had a tattoo of his gang name on his arm in large black print.

From the information gathered from observation, the interviews, and the files, I can confirm that each of these students is a member of a local gang and was engaged in gang activity. These observations and collected information are vital to the study as only true gang members can offer insight into gang members’ perceptions of their teachers and schooling.

Perceptions of Schooling

When I spoke to these young men, several themes emerged that clarified their perceptions of schooling. First, each student enjoyed school as social activity and all four students discussed a love of sports. Several enjoyed some aspects of school because they liked certain subjects and all participants had an attitude that school was boring in some respect. Below Table 3 represents the perceptions of schooling that resulted from the interview process.

Table 3*Perceptions of Schooling*

Name	Social Aspect	Sports	Enjoyed Subjects	Attitude about School
Uncle Bob	Yes	Yes, basketball	Yes, Gym	Boring
JB	Yes	Yes, football	No	Boring
Long Hair	Yes	Yes, soccer	Yes, History and Gym	Boring
Anonymous	Yes	Yes, football	No	Boring

Socialization

The social aspect of schooling is something that all four participants enjoyed. As stated in Chapter 2, the research has shown that the group structure of a gang is a product of social interactions (Whyte, 1981). It makes sense that these students who have joined gangs could also find pleasure in socializing. In addition, Klein (1995) wrote of “fringe gang members” who merely joined gangs to socialize. While it is unclear which of the participants were categorized as fringe members, it is easy to draw the conclusion that socialization was important to these four students. Uncle Bob liked that his friends attended school with him and JB spoke of socializing with his gang at school. Long Hair attended the football games to be with his friends and Anonymous enjoyed joking around with his peers during class time.

Sporting Activities

While none of the research indicated that gang members commonly enjoyed sports, all four of the students in this study participated in sporting events at his

school. Uncle Bob was a basketball player, JB and Anonymous were both football players, and Long Hair played soccer. There are implications for further research based on this connection that are discussed later in this chapter.

Subject Enjoyment and Links to Extra Curricular Activities

None of the research indicated that gang members would attend school if they enjoyed a particular subject. However, the research did discuss extracurricular activities that linked gang members to their school communities. The implication is that by helping a gang member find interest in subjects, he can be connected to extracurricular activities which make intervention more plausible. For example, Rodriguez (1993), a gang member from Los Angeles, wrote of his brother Rano who avoided gang membership because of his participation in after school theatre. Theatre is taught in most high schools in Virginia and many programs have afterschool plays in which students can participate. Tarcy (1995) wrote of a high school counselor who minimized afternoon gang activity in his community by working with gang members to rebuild cars. Many high schools offer hands-on trades classes; the possibility that a student can work afterschool with a trades club is also common in Virginia. The research suggests that gang members who become more active at school have less time for criminal activity.

On boredom

All four participants perceived school as “boring.” While none of the research addressed the concern of gang members who were bored in school, there is research to indicate that students who feel cared for are more likely to engage in class. If students are engaged in class, then they are paying attention and should not complain about being bored. The literature cites examples where students were engaged

because of the teacher forming positive relationships. For example, in her study, Dance (2002) spoke to students about their favorite teachers. The qualities that gave teachers the “favorite teacher” status included teachers who understood their students, who had a good sense of humor, who were good role models, and teachers to whom students could talk. The implication is that if a student values a teacher, he is more likely to value what he or she is teaching.

Another indication of student success in the literature results from teachers being actively involved in the student’s academics. Whytecliff Education Center had many at-risk students who were in gangs engage in their studies and find success in the classroom. The results of the study at Whytecliff Education Center demonstrate a population of teachers who were there were for students and worked to resolve student issues as quickly as possible. Cassidy and Bates (2005) determined that the teachers at this school were focused not on academics but on building relationships with the students. The teachers at Whytecliff developed a flexible and responsive curriculum that allowed each student to find success in school. In addition, the curriculum allowed students to succeed socially and emotionally. The students at Whytecliff Education Center did not complain of being bored in school.

Another study on classroom management practices connected care exhibited by teachers to student engagement. The study controlled for both gender and socioeconomic status and found that care was positively related to student engagement in the classroom (Nie & Lau, 2009). The implication is that teachers who find a way to connect with their students who are in gangs may have a better chance of engaging them in the classroom environment. If a student is not bored in class, he is more likely to be learning and trying to be successful.

Perceptions of Teachers and Care

The first aspect of student perceptions that must be analyzed are the perceptions of teachers that have been categorized as “reasons to like teachers” and “reasons to dislike teachers.” These perceptions are important based on the literature indicating that students who build relationships with the teachers were more successful. The Whytecliff Education Center offered one example as discussed in the paragraphs above. Another example was provided by Muller (2001). Her study on caring relationships and at-risk students suggests that caring teachers may motivate students who have been labeled at-risk. Dance (2002) also learned from the gang members in her study that a teacher caring about them was instrumental to success in the classroom (Dance, 2002). It is difficult for a student to build a relationship with a teacher if he does not like him or her.

Reasons to Dislike Teachers

Below is Table 4a.1 which outlines the reasons why the students in the study disliked their teachers. These reasons included the perception that a teacher was “trying to get” him, was aggravating, or talked down to him or threatened him. Only JB disliked any teacher who ignored him when he asked questions or needed help. Long Hair is not listed in this version of the chart stated that he liked all of his teachers. The implications of these reasons to dislike teachers are discussed at the end of this section.

Table 4a.1*Student Perceptions: Reasons to Dislike Teachers*

Name	Trying to “get me”	Aggravating	Ignoring	Talking Down to me/Threatening
Uncle Bob	X	X		X
JB			X	
Anonymous	X	X		X

When Teachers are “Trying to Get” Students

Considering the large and diverse populations of the students in today’s schools, it is not surprising that the single greatest complaint of students is that no one cares for them. These students often feel alienated from their schoolwork and separated from the adults who try to teach them (Noddings, 2005). This sentiment was supported in the interviews with gang members. Both Uncle Bob and Anonymous felt alienated while attending school as they perceived that the teachers were often “out to get” them. Uncle Bob discussed teachers who tried to “catch him” doing something wrong and Anonymous believed that his principal punished him for potential behaviors. Neither student liked the teachers or administrator who behaved in this manner.

When Teachers Aggravate Students

Both Uncle Bob and Anonymous expressed that they did not like teachers who aggravated them. According to Uncle Bob, a teacher was aggravating if he or she

yelled at him for what he perceived to be “no reason.” He also did not like teachers who might have a bad day and “take it out” on him. This was aggravating to him as he felt this behavior was an abuse of power. Anonymous was aggravated when a teacher would attempt to force him to do his work; he responded to a teacher encouraging him to do his work instead of the threats of being written up for insubordination if he did not comply.

When Teachers Threaten Students

The students often were threatened with write ups during their schooling experience; this seemed to be a common theme in all of the interviews. However, only Uncle Bob and Anonymous stated that they did not like teachers who threatened them. If a teacher threatens a student, even if it is just the threat of writing up a student who is not doing work, it is difficult to build a caring relationship. As discussed in the literature review, Blizek (1999) clarifies this concept by stating that caring for others requires people to act with appropriate motives and attitudes. By doing something with the wrong attitude, an act that was meant to be caring may turn into something that makes the act uncaring. Both Uncle Bob and Anonymous believed that when a teacher threatened him, he or she did not do so in his best interest. This factor alone may have kept them from feeling cared for in school and from building good relationships with their teachers.

While the other students did not complain about being threatened, both told stories of such instances happening in their schooling experiences. Long Hair seemed to accept it as part of the school. He spoke of teachers who would get angry at him for talking too much and would kick him out of class; he did seem to understand the reasons behind the threats and referred to them as “warnings.” Overall, Long Hair

stated that he liked all of his teachers and did not have many problems with any of them. JB also described similar experiences with teachers; he referred to the threats as “getting on” him for certain behaviors. He also spoke of one of his teachers, who he felt cared about him, who would threaten write ups if he did not do what she said. The difference in both Long Hair and JB’s interpretation of the “threats” was that they had a positive relationship with the teachers who delivered them.

When Teachers Ignore Students

JB disliked teachers who he felt ignored him. Noddings (2003) stated, “How good we can be depends at least in part on how others treat us” (p. 34). Being ignored by a teacher implies that the student is not worthy of assistance or even negative attention, which may create the attitude within the student that he is not worth anything. Building a relationship with a teacher in order to be successful is difficult with someone who does show not that he or she values him.

Implications of “Reasons to Dislike Teachers”

These four students offered insight into reasons why students in gangs dislike their teachers. While the idea of “dislike” is subjective, some lessons may be learned from this interview process on how to better connect with students in gangs.

The first implication is simple. As supported by the literature, if a teacher genuinely cares for a student, this feeling will be supported in action. Caring actions do not include teachers who try to catch students doing something wrong just to get them out of their classroom. Of the four students, two expressed that this was a common experience in their schooling history.

Many students could tell stories of being aggravated by their teachers. It is my guess that most students in America have had a teacher “get on their nerves” at some

point during their schooling career. However, in this study, the reasons that teachers aggravated these gang members seemed to have deeper meaning. Uncle Bob's expression of being aggravated by a teacher who yelled at him for "no reason" seems to tie directly into his perception that his teachers were "out to get him." Uncle Bob admitted in his interview to having issues trusting people; this lack of trust permeated all of his interviews as he told stories of relationships with his teachers. The implication is that building trust is imperative to Uncle Bob liking his teachers; in order to like a teacher, a student must also have some trust in a teacher. While not all the students in this study expressed these sentiments about trust and care, the literature supports this implication as a valid this theme.

Anonymous became aggravated when his teachers tried to force him to do his work. He stated simply that he would rather be encouraged by a teacher to work; when a teacher threatened to write him up for being insubordinate, he would become aggravated and not do anything or act out. The other interviews held similar themes in regards to being threatened. The students in these interviews did not perceive threats as a way to demonstrate care. The implication is that with gang members, unless there is a positive relationship present, threats are not a productive way to get results in the classroom. The students with negative relationships with their teachers in the study reacted to threats by acting out, shutting down, or walking out.

Gang members may react differently to threats within a classroom situation as most gang members feel like they have to constantly prove something. As we know from the literature, many students who join gangs have grown up in families wrought with violence, neglect, and drug abuse. These students often choose the path of gang membership to find the "respect" that is missing from their lives. Often gang

members believe that this respect is gained by instilling fear in people; violence and crime tend to be tactics to achieve this fear (Gerler, 2004). As a result, many gang members will react to threats more dramatically than the average classroom student. In addition, this study demonstrates that threats may be viewed more harshly between a teacher and student who do not have a positive relationship.

Today, sometimes violence may result from trying to maintain the gang's belief system; contemporary gangs also display violence when individual "respect" is challenged. From what the gang members in this interview expressed, these types of classroom "threats" are an issue because they considered it to be disrespectful. Anderson (1999) explains that "the heart of the code is the issue of respect – loosely defined as being treated right" (p. 33). When a member of a gang feels as if he is not being treated "right," he may react in an explosive or violent manner.

Reasons to Like Teachers

The factors discussed above demonstrate reasons a student may not like his teacher; these reasons seem to stifle relationship building in a classroom. If a teacher demonstrates any of these characteristics, building a relationship may be more difficult, therefore indicating a lower chance of academic success.

Building relationships with teachers whom the students liked seemed to be easier for the participants in this study. During the interview process, several themes emerged that explained the reasons why they liked their teachers. The three major factors listed by the participants highlighted are listed in Table 4b.1 below. The other factors will not be analyzed as only one or two of the students expressed these factors as reasons to like a teacher; these factors also held little support in the literature. The

implications of the reasons why the students liked their teachers are discussed at the end of this section.

Table 4b.1

Student Perceptions: Reasons to Like Teachers

Name	“Chill”	Don’t bother/jump on students	Helpful
Uncle Bob	X	X	X
JB	X	X	X
Long Hair			X
Anonymous	X	X	X

Helpful Teachers

The literature provides many examples of students in gangs who responded to helpful teachers. The most profound examples came from the study at Whytecliff Education Center in 2005. Cassidy and Bates (2005) report students agreed that caring was a part of being a teacher at Whytecliff. They stated that the teachers helped out with their problems and were easy to approach for help. The study highlighted that the students viewed the school as helping them through tough times and as making education fun. Therefore, it is not surprising that all four of the participants liked their teachers who were helpful. They each told stories of experiencing helpful teachers at their various schools.

JB easily made a connection between teachers being helpful and experiencing care. When asked about feeling cared for in his schools, he discussed two teachers

who helped him out with both academics and his personal life. He often expressed that these teachers were not obligated to help him, and that they “did more than they had to.” This sentiment echoes the Cassidy and Bates (2005) study in that the students associated being helped with experiencing care.

Anonymous made the same connection to “care” and “helpful.” He told a story about a teacher who cared for him and helped him out with his personal problems. Anonymous also described a situation when one of his staff at the residential treatment facility advocated for him to get a home visit, which was important to him. As a result, Anonymous expressed that he felt like this staff member cared for him.

“Chilled Out” Teachers who do not “Bother or jump on” Students

Three of the four participants stated that they liked a teacher who was “chill” or who did not “bother or jump on” students. The young men expressed that they preferred teachers who did not yell at them and who did not “get in their face.” The researchers who studied the Whytecliff Education Center noted that the facility was a calm environment. According to their observations, none of the teachers ever yelled and that no one was ever hurried. According to the research, the facility held a sense of peace.

In this study, there were seven ways that the students felt cared for, which are highlighted in Table 5 below.

Table 5*Caring perceptions: Ways students felt cared for*

Name	Knows Student	Spends One-on- One time	Says It	Understan ds Me	Providing for needs/looks out for me	Talks to me/advice/ sharing	Helps me out
Uncle Bob	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
JB	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Long Hair	X	X		X	X	X	X
Anonymou s	X	X	X		X	X	X

Teachers Who “Get to know” Students

In her study, Dance learned that gang members valued teachers who got to know their students. One of the teachers in her study was quoted as saying, “We may spend 15 minutes teaching and more time getting to know your son” (Dance, 2002, p. 118). One way to get to know a student is to spend time with him, which is also a factor that demonstrated care to the participants. In Dance’s study, the students’ favorite teachers also included teachers who took time for their students and who believed in their abilities (Dance, 2002). In the Cassidy and Bates (2005) study, the staff stated that they were privileged to have the opportunity to spend time with the at-risk students at school. This view of the students allowed the teachers to focus on developing student talents and interests and to focus on the positive aspects of their lives; it also created a regard for each student absent of negative judgment.

In this study, all four students expressed that a teacher who learned more about them indicated of care. Each student told stories of teachers working with them to help solve their personal problems.

Teachers Who Spend Time with Students

All four students spoke of valuing teachers who took the time to get to know them as individuals and who spent time with them one-on-one. The research supports these views as ways to demonstrate care and to help students be successful in the classroom. In addition, three of the four students felt that if a teacher understood him, then he or she cared for him. Getting to know the students and spending time with them are two ways to understand their perspectives, insights, and behaviors.

Teachers Who Understand Students

Understanding the students was a major factor in students feeling cared for within the framework of the research. Dance (2002) learned that a few students in her study believed that their teachers understood what they had to deal with on the streets of their neighborhoods. In addition, the most common response from the gang members was that teachers did not understand their culture. Dance continued with her observations by concluding that teachers who do not understand the street culture or even try to understand what these youth are experiencing will not be able to motivate or teach the gang members in the classroom. According to Dance, teachers who do understand the culture or, who at least care enough about the student to listen to them and learn about the challenges of being part of a gang, will have more success with gang members in the classroom. Both her field observations and interviews indicated a positive correlation between feeling understood and being motivated to work with a teacher.

At the Whytecliff Education Center, the staff worked with not only the students but with their families as well. This led the staff to have a better understanding of each student and his or her family. Overall, the teachers perceived and enacted caring based on the development of relationships with the students. This ethic of care was recognized by the receivers of the care, the students, and was individually focused based on student needs. As a result, the students placed a high value on the fact that the teachers at Whytecliff both understood them and acknowledged them (Cassidy & Bates, 2005).

Being understood was valuable to three of the four students in this study. The students expressed in their interviews that they valued being listened to and felt like teachers who demonstrated this quality cared for them as individuals. Long Hair expressed wanting teachers to use an “understanding voice” when they spoke to him as he did not like it when teachers were harsh. Uncle Bob spoke of teachers who understood him; the reason that he knew they understood him was evident in their personal sharing with him about their life. He appreciated it when teachers took the time to connect to him through sharing. He also expressed that in his “perfect school,” the teachers would be understanding; specifically, he wanted teachers to understand what his life had been like and his individual situation. Last, JB spoke of his teachers at the residential facility understanding how he felt living in a group home. However, he could not articulate how he knew they understood, he just felt like they did understand.

Teachers Who “Look Out For” Students

In this study, students felt care when provided for or “looked out for” by their teachers. Both Uncle Bob and Anonymous rarely felt cared for by their teachers.

However, when their gang or family provided for them they felt care; this sentiment was not expressed within a school setting by these two young men. Long Hair did feel provided for when his coach offered him a ride home. Both JB and Long Hair had teachers “look out” for them by helping them stay out of trouble, working with them on their personal problems, and by offering advice on how to handle situations. While there was nothing in the research to support gang members needing “to be looked out for” by their teachers, there are implications for the classroom that will be discussed in detail later in this chapter.

The sentiment of being “looked out” for links directly to the participants feeling cared for when a teacher or staff would talk to them, share with them, or offer advice. All four participants cited examples of times when they felt cared for when a teacher would engage in this type of discussion with them. The research supports discussion as a way to reach students who are in gangs.

Teachers Who Talk to Students

Nel Noddings (2005) lists a component of establishing care in the classroom to be the use of dialogue. She states that exchange of ideas in a classroom must be open-ended. Students and teachers must be able to communicate openly to find understanding, empathy, and appreciation (Noddings, 2005). Engaging in dialogue with each student permits discussion about not only the content, but also about their relationships. It connects teachers to students and helps to maintain caring relations. Dialogue is important because it allows teachers and students to gain knowledge of each other that can form the foundation of a caring relationship (Noddings, 2005). Dance (2002) reported that the gang members’ favorite teachers were the teachers they could talk to about their life and their experiences on the streets. One of the

students, Sam, stated, “No [teachers don’t understand the streets] ‘cuz if they did, they would talk about it, and none of my teachers talk about it. I want them to talk about it [sic]” (Dance, 2002, p. 76). Lastly, she concluded that urban students are “more likely to trust teachers who openly talk about street culture and give viable advice about avoiding illicit activities that take place on urban streets” (p. 83).

Cassidy and Bates (2005) provided other examples of the importance of teachers talking to, sharing with, and offering advice to their students who are in gangs. At the Whytecliff Education Center, students stated that they felt safe to talk about their problems at home. They could ask questions, take chances, and share their thoughts and feelings. In fact, one student spoke highly of the staff there, stating that his teachers “...actually talk to you about what’s going on, while other teachers are like, “whatever, just do your work [sic]” (Cassidy & Bates, 2005, p. 88).

The study at the residential facility supports the literature on the importance of dialogue in the classroom. This dialogue should include open discussion, sharing experiences, and offering advice. Within this open discussion, if a teacher is able to verbalize care for his or student, the student may also feel care. In this study, three of the four participants felt care when a teacher expressed care through language. This type of expression can act as confirmation to the student and enhance the caring teacher to student process (Noddings, 2005). In order for a confirmation to occur, a relation of trust must already be established. Students must constantly see the full process of a caring act take place and teachers must re-enforce these acts regularly (Noddings, 2005).

In this study, all four participants expressed the importance of teachers talking to them and sharing with them. Each of them cited open discussion as an example of

feeling cared for by his teachers. Anonymous felt care from his teachers at his former school as they would sit down and talk to him about his problems. He also spoke fondly of an Administrator who allowed him to sit in his office where the two would talk about anything. Long Hair enjoyed spending time with his teachers who talked to him about his “study situation” and about his personal issues. He expressed gratitude toward teachers who knew enough about his personal life to help him make connections between his behavior and potential consequences. As stated previously, Uncle Bob enjoyed it when his teachers told him stories about their personal life that connected him to them and demonstrated an understanding of what he was enduring in his personal life. Finally, JB told several stories of teachers talking to him about his personal problems.

Open dialogue between the teachers and the participants of this study proved vital in reciprocating a caring relationship. As supported by the literature, a caring relationship seems to be the key in classroom success of at-risk students.

Helpful Teachers: Review

As previously discussed, the students in this study all felt care when a teacher or administrator helped them out. The research has drawn a direct link between a teacher being helpful and caring about students. These implications are discussed below.

Implications of Reasons Why Students Like Teachers and Care Factors

The interview findings, as well as the literature, support those teachers who are perceived as helpful have more success with gang members in their classrooms. On one level, the students viewed the helpful teachers as being teachers who cared for them. On another level, being helpful, according to the students, does not mean

simply helping out with class work and math problems. “Helpful teachers” were those teachers who also took the time to help the students with their personal life issues. The implication is that a teacher must not only help gang members academically, but personally in order to affect their classroom success.

The implication that resulted from the discussion of teachers being more liked if they were “chilled out” is that teachers who have a calmer demeanor and create a more relaxed environment in their classrooms may be more successful with students who are in gangs.

During this study, “care” took on many forms within the classroom environment. First, the students expressed feeling care when a teacher took the time “to get to know” them. This was achieved by the teachers who spent one-on-one time with the students. These factors imply that gang members may respond better to one-on-one positive attention. It also implies that teachers who take time to get to know their students and spend time with them enable the students to feel valued and important. As demonstrated by the research, this often leads to academic success (Cassidy & Bates, 2005, Dance, 2002).

In the interviews and the literature, the teachers who learned more about their students on a personal level did so by spending time with them outside of instructional time. This resulted in understanding students’ strengths, weaknesses, and perspectives better. In this study, it was important to three of the four participants to be understood by their teachers. This understanding usually came after open dialogue with the students that became a foundation of a caring relationship. The implication is that teachers who genuinely care about their students will reach them through open discussion and understanding.

The last factor of care was demonstrated by teachers and staff who “looked out” for their students. Students felt care when a teacher was protective of them, assisted them through major personal issues, and who advocated for them. This suggests that teachers who exhibit these behaviors will be able to help gang members be successful in the classroom.

Other Considerations

This study involved many intricacies that have not been discussed. In order to provide a full analysis of the study as a whole, there are other factors that must be considered and analyzed. These factors include a lack of participation in the study and realistic goal setting.

When this study began, it was my intention to interview at least 15 students who were enrolled at the residential site, the two day schools, or the two group homes that were a part of the treatment facility. The leadership staff at the treatment facility felt that there were more than enough potential candidates. I met with staff and teachers at several of the treatment locations individually to train them to recruit properly and under the guidelines set by the Institutional Review Board.

Months went by before I even received a return call from a recruiter at one of the locations. Finally, one student had agreed to participate in the study. The recruiter was excited as the student had been hesitant at first but had later agreed as he built confidence in himself and as his leadership skills were developing within the context of the program. This student’s interview was to serve as my pilot study.

When I arrived on the campus at the residential facility, a staff member directed me to the offices where I was to hold the interview. I came with the participant’s requested snack of a combo meal from the local Hardees. However,

when I entered the office, there was no one there to greet me. After a few minutes, the secretary came in and explained to me that the principal was on his way up to speak to me and asked me to have a seat in one of the conference rooms.

When the principal arrived, he shook my hand and apologized for my wait. Then, he explained to me that there was a scheduling conflict and the student I was scheduled to meet would not be back until later in the day. We rescheduled the appointment and I left the combo meal for the secretary. However, I was not able to meet with the student as later that week he changed his mind about participating.

During the process of interviewing, which lasted over six months, this first student actually agreed to participate again after he had been relocated to one of the group homes associated with the treatment facility. I traveled over an hour away to knock on the door of an empty group home. In hopes that he would return soon, I left a message on the answering machine of the home and then left. I explored the city where the group home was located, did some shopping, and waited around in my car. Three hours later, one of the counseling staff called me back to tell me that the student had changed his mind again and would not be participating. He had decided to go to a movie with his house mates instead.

Out of approximately 16 potential candidates for the study, only four agreed to participate. Several of the students made a comment to the recruiter that they would participate if they were compensated for it; the offer of a special snack was not enough to encourage participation. The recruiters could not offer any explanation for the lack of participation.

The second factor that resulted from the study that deserves analysis is that three of the four gang members interviewed had set unrealistic future goals for

themselves. JB, a student who had difficulty staying in a classroom for long periods of time, wanted to go to the University of North Carolina to study computer science. JB was working on his diploma during the interview process and claimed to have all As and Bs. Long Hair, who had been arrested for fighting with his gang, wanted to finish college and join the FBI. Last, Anonymous wanted to go to Virginia Tech to be an architect because he liked to draw buildings. Anonymous was only going to be earning his GED.

My first instinct was that these students were giving me information that they thought I wanted to hear. However, it is possible that their sense of reality is skewed as a result of their involvement with their gang. First, the popular media tends to glamorize the lifestyle of gang members, and many films depict hardcore gang members finding success through rap music or uplifting stories of life changing events that do not generally happen to “real people”. Dance (2002) argues that the popular view and portrayal of gang members in the media and on film are based more on fiction rather than on fact. Uncle Bob was the only student who set what I considered to be a reasonable goal for someone in his position. He wanted his step father to hire him after he completed his GED to work for his construction company.

Implications for Further Research

This study reflects the perceptions and experiences of four gang members. It highlights their views based on what happened to them in the classroom and at school. The findings do not necessarily represent the views of other gang members in similar educational settings. In order to fully explain gang members’ perceptions of their schooling and teachers, a larger sample of gang members would be required.

I discovered that many of the potential candidates for the study did not want to participate. The staff suggested that part of the reason may result from loyalty to the gang. Is there a way to design a study that would enable gang members to participate without fear of repercussion? How can researchers overcome this obstacle to better understand gangs in schools? In addition, another recommendation would be to duplicate the study with a focus on teenage girls who are gang members. Are their views similar? How do teenage girls in gangs find success in the classroom?

It is also important to view this problem from the perspective of teachers who are currently in the classroom. This study did not address teacher perceptions; it is possible that much can be learned about dealing with gang members in the classroom based on teacher insight and experience. How do teachers feel about gang members in their classrooms? What stories could teachers tell about gang members under their supervision and what can be learned from these stories? What can teachers offer to each other about working with gang members?

During this study, I learned that all four participants enjoyed sports. I am interested in the idea of these gang members being so attracted to playing sports. Do other gang members feel this way? If so, what is it about sporting activities that leads gang members to want to be involved? How can schools use this information to empower gang members, improve their instruction, and get them off the streets? The idea of a gang member and a “jock” are opposites, but is there something about being an athlete that can help these young men make better choices?

The young men in this study have all taken the time to share with me their insights and ideas about school. I asked them to help me understand their points of view, and they spent several hours sharing with me, laughing with me, and enabling

me to take a descriptive picture of their schooling experiences. I am grateful to these young men just as I am grateful to the residential treatment facility that opened its doors to assist me.

The most profound lesson that can be learned from this study is that there is still much work to do to understand this complex and broken group of students who are enrolled in America's schools. These students have helped support the literature; caring is a key to success of the gang members who attend school.

As a teacher myself, I have already begun to apply the lessons I have learned throughout this study in my own classroom. I try to listen closely when my students are sharing, ask more questions of a personal nature, and reach out to even those students who seem unreachable. I remind myself daily that these gang members are still only children who need to be educated. I try to remember the words of the participants and encourage students rather than threaten them. Some days are easier than others, as there is part of me who still holds a sense of fear when the gang members who take my class begin to get aggravated and behave in threatening ways. When these students do act out, I assign detentions, to be served with me, whenever I can instead of giving office referrals. Then, I try to take these discipline opportunities to spend one-on-one time with them instead of assigning busy work and expecting silence. It has been a process for me; I expect many teachers share in my anxiety and frustration with the gang culture interrupting instruction.

In this study, these four gang members have been given a voice. They have expressed their experiences and what care looks like to them. This catalyst for a caring environment comes from the hearts of the teachers who greet them at the classroom door every day.

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APPENDIX 1

1. For the purposes of this research, I cannot use your real name. What would you like to be called?
2. How old are you?
3. Tell me about yourself. What do you like to do? What are your talents?
4. Do you know how come you were chosen to be interviewed today?
5. Do you feel comfortable telling me about your involvement with your gang back home?
6. Where did you go to school before you were placed at the residential treatment facility?
7. How long have you been at the facility?
8. Did you like your old school? How come?
9. What was the best part about your old school? What did you like the most?
10. What was the worst part about your old school? What did you dislike the most?
11. Tell me about a time where your involvement or identification with a gang influenced your school day? What happened?
12. How do you feel about your teachers from your old school?
13. Did you have any teachers that you really did not like? How come?
14. Who was your favorite teacher? How come?
15. Were there any adult figures at your old school that you feel really cared about you? Tell me about him/her.
16. Tell me a situation where you felt cared for at your old school.

17. Do you like your new school at the residential treatment facility? How come?
18. What is the best part about classes at the residential treatment facility? What do you like the most?
19. What is the worst part about classes at the residential treatment facility? What do you dislike the most?
20. How do you feel about your teachers from the residential treatment facility?
21. Do you feel that they care for you? How come?
22. Paint a picture of a “perfect school.” What would it look like? What courses would you take? What would the teachers be like?
23. How would you improve your schooling at the residential treatment facility?
24. Do you have any advice for first year teachers?
25. What questions do you have for me?
26. Is there anything else you would like to tell me about your schooling experiences?



**YOUTH ASSENT FORM
For Student Participants**

TITLE: Listening to their Voices: Gang Members' Perceptions of Caring in School

VCU IRB NO.: HM12055

This form may have some words that you do not know. Please ask someone to explain any words that you do not know. You may take home a copy of this form to think about and talk to your parents about before you decide if you want to be in this study.

What is this study about?

The purpose of my research with Dr. Maike Philipsen from Virginia Commonwealth University is to talk to students who know a lot about gangs or who are part of a gang and to get their ideas about school. I want to learn how you see your schooling experiences and what you think of your teachers. Because of your background and your experiences, your staff has suggested that you can make a positive difference in this study by helping educators understand your schooling experiences.

What will happen to me if I choose to be in this study?

I would like to meet with you for two interviews, both of which may last about an hour. In the first meeting, I will ask you to give yourself a name (an alias) to be used for the study so that no one will ever know your real identity. Then, I will ask you questions about your experiences in schools and about your perceptions of your teachers. In the second meeting I will ask you to review a transcription of the first meeting and to clarify your ideas. The meetings will be tape recorded so that I am sure to get your ideas, but no names will be recorded on the tape.

If you decide to be in this research study, you will be asked to sign this form. Do not sign the form until you have all your questions answered, and understand what will happen to you.

What might happen if I am in this study?

While you may be uncomfortable talking to me about your experiences with gangs in school, I want to assure you that what you share with me is confidential. Unless you tell me that you are going to hurt yourself or someone else, I will not share what you tell me with anyone.

Sometimes talking about these subjects causes people to become upset. You do not have to talk about any subjects that you do not want to talk about, and you may leave the

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session at any time or respond to a question with “no comment.” If you become upset, you may meet with your counselor or staff to talk about it.

What do I get if I am in this study?

You will receive a special snack to enjoy during the interviews to demonstrate appreciation for your participation.

Will you tell anyone what I say?

I will not tell anyone the answers you give me. I will not share your answers with your teachers or parents or friends. If you tell me that someone is hurting you, or that you might hurt yourself or someone else, the law requires me to let people in authority know so they can help you.

If I talk about this study in speeches or in writing, I will never use your name.

It would also be helpful if you allowed me to review your file and take some notes on your history, your background, and the reasons that you were placed at Elk Hill. Remember, this information will also remain confidential and will only be linked to you by your alias!

Please initial one of the following choices:

_____ I give permission to review my student file for research purposes.

_____ I DO NOT give permission to review my student file for research purposes.

Do I have to be in this study?

Your participation is voluntary; this means that you do not have to participate. However, please consider letting me interview you. If you choose to be in the study, you may drop out at anytime. No one will blame or you or criticize you if you drop out of the study. Not only will your views be valuable to this study, but you will also be providing information that may help educators in the classroom to understand how gangs and street culture can affect education. If you decide to take part in the study, you may also choose not to answer any questions you do not want to and you may stop at any time. However, if you choose not to participate, it will have no affect on your treatment or your time spent at Elk Hill and there will no penalty for your decision.

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Questions?

If you have questions about being in this study, you can talk to the following persons or you can have your parent or another adult call or write:

Dr. Maïke Philipsen
4052 Oliver Hall
School of Education, VCU
1015 West Main Street
Richmond, VA 23284
Telephone: (804) 827-2630
Email: mphilip@vcu.edu

Martha Wall-Whitfield
Adjunct Faculty Office
1015 West Main Street, VCU
Richmond, VA 23284
Telephone: (804) 502-6243
Email: wallml@vcu.edu

Office for Research
Virginia Commonwealth University
800 East Leigh Street, Suite 113
P.O. Box 980568
Richmond, VA 23298
Telephone: 804-827-2157

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Do not sign this form if you have any questions. Be sure someone answers your questions!

Assent:

I have read this form. I understand the information about this study. I am willing to be in this study.

Youth name printed

Youth signature

Date

Name of Person Conducting Informed Assent
Discussion / Witness *, printed

Signature of Person Conducting Informed Assent
Discussion / Witness *

Date

Principal Investigator Signature (if different from above)

Date **

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**RESEARCH SUBJECT INFORMATION AND CONSENT FORM
For Parents of Participants**

TITLE: Listening to their Voices: Gang Members' Perceptions of Caring in School

VCU IRB NO.: HM12055

My name is Martha and I am working on a project that involves research about students who know a lot about gangs or who are part of a gang in order to get their ideas about school. I want to learn how they see their schooling experiences and what they think of their teachers.

This consent form may contain words that you do not understand. Please ask the study staff to explain any words that you do not clearly understand. You may take home an unsigned copy of this consent form to think about or discuss with family or friends before making your decision.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

Your son has been referred to me by Elk Hill Farm as a potential candidate for a research project that is being conducted with support of both Virginia Commonwealth University and Elk Hill Farm, Inc. Because of his background and experiences, your child's staff has suggested that he can make a positive difference in this study by helping educators understand his schooling experiences. For the purposes of this study, only male students will be asked to participate.

DESCRIPTION OF THE STUDY AND YOUR CHILD'S INVOLVEMENT

If you decide to allow your child to be in this research study, you will be asked to sign this consent form after you have had all your questions answered and understand what will happen to your child.

I would like to meet with your child for two interviews, both of which may last about an hour. In the first meeting, your child will give himself a name (an alias) to be used for the study so that no one will ever know his real identity. Then, he will be asked questions about his experiences in schools and about his perceptions of his teachers. In the second meeting he will be asked to review a transcription of the first meeting and will be asked questions to clarify his ideas. The meetings will be tape recorded so that I am sure to get his ideas, but no names will be recorded on the tape.

Significant new findings developed during the course of the research which may relate to your willingness to continue participation will be provided to you and your son.

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RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS

While he may be uncomfortable talking to me about his experiences with gangs in school, I want to assure you that what he shares with me is confidential. Unless he tells me that he is going to hurt himself or someone else, I will not share what he tells me with anyone. Sometimes talking about these subjects causes people to become upset. Your child does not have to talk about any subjects that he does not want to talk about, and he may leave the session at any time or respond to a question with "no comment." If he becomes upset, I will allow your child the option of meeting with his counselor or staff to talk about it.

BENEFITS TO YOU AND OTHERS

While participation is voluntary, please consider allowing me interview your child. Not only will his views be valuable to this study, but he will also be providing information that may help educators in the classroom to understand how gangs and the street culture can affect education. However, if you choose not to allow him to participate, it will have no affect on his treatment or his time spent at Elk Hill. There will no penalty for your decision.

While there are no direct benefits for you or your child by participating in this study, the information that we learn from the students in this study may help us design better programs for those who are affected by gangs in their communities.

COSTS

There are no costs for participating in this study other than the time your child will spend in the interview sessions.

PAYMENT FOR PARTICIPATION

Your child will receive a special snack to enjoy during the interviews to demonstrate appreciation for his participation.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Potentially identifiable information about your child will consist of his experiences in his schools and with his teachers. His real name will not ever be used in the study and no one from Elk Hill will know who stated what in the interviews; the staff will not know unless your child discloses information to them or to other students. Data is being collected only for research purposes.

Only the researcher will know which student stated what and the list of identifying names will be destroyed upon completion of the study. This interview data will be identified only by the alias names given by the student and will be stored in a

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locked drawer at the home of the researcher. All personal identifying information will be kept in password protected files and these files will be deleted upon completion of the study.

It would also be helpful if you allowed me to review your child's file and take some notes on his history, background, and the reasons that he is placed at Elk Hill. Remember, this information will also remain confidential and will only be linked to him by the alias that he provides. This information that will be gained from student files will be kept in a locked file cabinet until after the study ends and will be destroyed at that time.

Please initial one of the following choices:

_____ I give consent to review my child's student file for research purposes.

_____ I DO NOT give consent to review my child's student file for research purposes.

Interview data will be kept indefinitely. Access to all data will be limited to study personnel. A data and safety monitoring plan is established.

In addition, the researcher will be applying for a Certificate of Confidentiality. A Certificate of Confidentiality is a document that protects personally identifiable information about subjects in the research project while the Certificate is in effect. Generally, Certificates are effective on the date of issuance or upon the beginning of the research project. The expiration date will correspond to the completion of the study. A Certificate of Confidentiality protects all information identifiable to any individual who participates as a research subject during the time that the Certificate is in effect. However, the protection afforded by the Certificate is permanent.

While Certificates protect against involuntary disclosure, researchers are not prevented from the voluntary disclosure of matters such as child abuse, reportable communicable diseases, or subject's threatened violence to self or others.

What we find from this study may be presented at meetings or published in papers, but your child's name will not ever be used in these presentations or papers.

As stated earlier, the interviews will be audio taped, but no names will be recorded. At the beginning of the session, all members will be asked to use their alias only so that no names are recorded. The tapes and the notes will be stored in a locked cabinet. After the information from the tapes is typed up and approved by the student, the tapes will be destroyed.

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VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION AND WITHDRAWAL

Remember, your child does not have to participate in this study. If you choose to allow participation, he may stop at any time without any penalty. He may also choose not to answer particular questions that are asked in the study. If you choose not to allow him to participate, it will have no affect on his treatment or his time spent at Elk Hill. There will no penalty for your decision.

QUESTIONS

In the future, you may have questions about your child's participation in this study. If you have any questions, complaints, or concerns about the research, contact:

Dr. Maïke Philipsen
4052 Oliver Hall
School of Education, VCU
1015 West Main Street
Richmond, VA 23284
Telephone: (804) 827-2630
Email: mphilip@vcu.edu

Martha Wall-Whitfield
Adjunct Faculty Office
1015 West Main Street, VCU
Richmond, VA 23284
Telephone: (804) 502-6243
Email: wallml@vcu.edu

If you have any questions about your child's rights as a participant in this study, you may contact:

Office for Research
Virginia Commonwealth University
800 East Leigh Street, Suite 113
P.O. Box 980568
Richmond, VA 23298
Telephone: 804-827-2157

You may also contact this number for general questions, concerns or complaints about the research. Please call this number if you cannot reach the research team or wish to talk to someone else. Additional information about participation in research studies can be found at <http://www.research.vcu.edu/irb/volunteers.htm>.

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PERMISSION

Do not sign this form unless you have had a chance to ask questions and have received satisfactory answers to all of your questions!

I have been given the chance to read this consent form. I understand the information about this study. Questions that I wanted to ask about the study have been answered. My signature says that I am willing for my child to participate in this study. I will receive a copy of the consent form once I have agreed to participate.

Name of Child (printed)

Name of Parent or Legal Guardian (Printed)

Parent or Legal Guardian Signature

Date

Name of Legally Authorized Representative (Printed)

Legally Authorized Representative Signature

Date

Name of Person Conducting Informed Consent (Printed)
Discussion / Witness

Signature of Person Conducting Informed Consent
Discussion / Witness

Date

Principal Investigator Signature (if different from above)

Date

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4/30/09 HT/LAB

Martha Wall-Whitfield, Ph.D.

4018 Tanner Slip Circle

Chester, VA 23831

wallml@vcu.edu

(804) 502-6243

Martha was born in Raleigh, North Carolina in 1974 to Joseph and Sylvia Wall. She attended college at Virginia Commonwealth University in Richmond, Virginia and received her Bachelor's in Fine Arts for Theatre Performance, her Master's in Education, Administration and Supervision, and her Doctor of Philosophy in Educational Leadership.

May 2002-May 2010
University

Virginia Commonwealth

- Doctor of Philosophy in Educational Leadership
- Dissertation topic: **Gangs in Schools**

Aug 1998-May 2002
University

Virginia Commonwealth

- Master of Education, Administration and Supervision

Aug 1992-May 1996
University

Virginia Commonwealth

- Bachelor of Fine Arts, Theatre Performance
- Graduated Magna Cum Laude

Postgraduate Professional License: PGP-0603653

Administration and Supervision, PREK-12

Theatre Arts, PREK-12

Current Employment

Adjunct Faculty
Present

Virginia Commonwealth University

August 2006 –

- Preparation and instruction of the Foundations of Education course, a teacher preparation course designed to view education from a historical, sociological, philosophical, and anthropological perspective. Preparation and instruction of Ethics and Policy in Education course, a graduate level course for future teachers, administrators, and counselors that

focuses on an analysis of the moral dimensions of teaching and educational policies and practices.

- Develop and implement lessons to expose students to different models of interpretation as a framework within which to critically analyze such questions as the changing meanings and purposes of education.

Employer Contact

James McMillan

Email: jhmcmill@vcu.edu

Phone: (804) 827-2620

Online Faculty

**The University of Phoenix
Present**

August 2008-

- Preparation and instruction of the Assessment and Evaluation course, a course that focuses on developing the skills necessary to become effective assessors of adult learners in postsecondary and training environments. Learners develop assessments and analyze how assessment data is used to improve instruction and learning. Additionally, the purposes, the methods, and the reporting of evaluation for trainers are explored.
- Also hired to teach Adult Performance Improvement and Management, Instructional Strategies for Adult Learners, and Facilitation of Instruction for Diverse Adult Learners.

August 2004-Present

**Matoaca High School
County**

Chesterfield

Theatre Teacher

- Develop and implement multi-faceted theatre curriculum for high school students of all learning levels.
- Direct main stage shows and musical, one-act, talent show, and sponsor the Drama Club and International Thespian Honor Society.
- Direct and train IMPROV TEAM, supervise six shows a year.
- 2007-2008, Developed and implemented Special Education Theatre Program which taught theatre and sensory lessons to all 75 self-contained special education students. Program catered to students with severe disabilities, autism, and students with mild and severe mental retardation.
- Staff Development Committee member (2007-2008). Trained incoming teachers on behavior management.
- County trainer (2008-2009) and new teacher mentor (2005-2006, 2008-2009, 2009-2010).
- Developed theatre program and increased service to students from approximately 100 students in 2004-2005 to currently serving over 350 students yearly.

Department Chair (2004-2007)

- Provided instructional leadership to a department of ten, including both performing arts and visual arts teachers.
- Managed department budgets, both spending and fund raising.
- Served on leadership team.
- Managed substitutes for the department.
- Upon resignation (due to new responsibilities as an adjunct at VCU), chose and trained incoming department chair for duties.

Presentations

“Using Creative Techniques in Your Classroom”
Chesterfield County Curriculum Academy, June 2009

“Using Creative Techniques in Your Classroom”
Chesterfield County New Teacher Training, May 2009

“Gangs in Schools”
Matoaca High School, In-Service Training April 2009

“Using Creative Techniques in Your Classroom”
Matoaca High School, In-Service Training, March 2009

“Classroom Management”
Matoaca High School, In-Service Training, January 2009

“Using Creative Techniques in Your Classroom”
MERC, Conference Presenter, 2008

Awards and Recognitions

*Matoaca High School, Teacher of the Year Nominee for 2005-2006, 2007-2008, 2009-2010

*Summer 2006- Selected to teach SAT writing preparation course at William & Mary for their STARR program

*Summer 2005- Externship with Richmond Police Department. Partnership with Gang Unit and Community Care Unit to develop programming for Hispanic Community.

*2002-2004 Local and Nationally Recognized Trainer for YMCA: Presented in Tampa and Salt Lake City for National Child Care Conferences. Award winning theatre arts program and leadership trainings.

*Elk Hill Farm Employee of the Month, July 2001 and September 2000

*Earned National Early Childhood Program Accreditation, La Petite Academy, 1998

Available Documents

Recent examples of syllabi

- EDUS 300, Foundations of Education
- EDUS 673, Ethics and Policy
- AET 535, Assessment and Evaluation in Adult Education and Training

Copies of recent performance evaluations from Matoaca High School, University of Phoenix, and Virginia Commonwealth University